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THE HORSE SUN
(SAPTA'SVA)

By
L F LOVEDAY PRIOR

“Wake up, my brothers, for the morning is at hand”



LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMAR

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NOTICE

THE writer wishes to make it clear that in this book no character, Indian or European, is drawn from any original alive or dead, nor is any particular State or tribe described. Names of places have been borrowed entirely at random, and only upon such frivolous grounds as considerations of euphony—for example, the name of Ranthambor in the State of Bundi which the writer has seen neither in fact nor picture. Gogunda, a region of Mewar, bordering on Marwar, not a lake, as in the story. Only one liberty has been taken with history, the Delhi Durbar being held in 1911, not 1908.

It may be objected that the portrait here given of India is unduly romantic and gorgeous—to which it is answered, that this land and people are not *India* but a country of India—a country not free of the prevailing deformities but possessing the qualities described.

This book is humbly dedicated to all the people of that future which is implicit in the present, to a resurrection due *RAJASTHAN*, with which is *PAKISTAN*.

L F LOVEDAY PRIOR

OXFORD, 1944

CHAPTER I

AN HEIR IS BORN

CAIRO, in the late months of 1942 two officers were sitting on the steps of an hotel where everybody meets everybody. The senior officer had red tabs and a red band round his cap; the boy was on twenty-four hours' leave from the front.

"God," exclaimed the young man, "now I wish the whistle would go. All this waiting. Just sitting and waiting at El Alamein. And who will move first? The Germans or we?"

"You boys are very nervy," replied the senior man. "When I was——"

"All right, all right, sir," said his nephew, laughing. "I say, just look at that car arriving. What a car. My word, who has a car like that nowadays? Some Yank? No, it's an Indian. My word, what a magnificent man. By Jove! D'you know who he is, sir?"

The elder fixed a monocle in his eye and scrutinised the personage alighting at the foot of the steps.

"Original of Alexander's Poros," he said, "or did your classics stop short of Alexander's Indian campaign?"

The man passed up the steps, across the verandah, and into the hall, the object of much discreet attention. Lieutenant-General Sir Humphrey de Travers let the monocle drop out of his eye. He only needed it for distant sight.

"Yes," he said, polishing the lens, "yes, I know who he is. Oh yes. One of the Princes. H'm. Yes. That's Surthawara Surthawara."

This was the bright half of the spring month of Phalgun, 1898. The moon stood high in the heavens, and her beaming light flooded over the dry rocky peaks of the Aravalli and shone on the glassy lakes.

In the kingdom of Surthawara was a battlemented hill, and on the crag of that hill grew the castle of Ranthambor. Throughout the castle of Ranthambor reigned an expectancy, and in the women's courts a birth was in progress.

Was it to be a son? wondered the English medical woman administering the event. But her wondering was a secondary thing. She was English, a professional woman.

Was it to be a son? wondered the Anglo-Indian assistant, with less detachment. For she was half of the country, and could understand what the midwives were saying.

Was it to be a son? wondered the Indian midwives, with venomous hope: the hereditary midwives of the royal family, cheated of their moment by the Englishwoman.

Was it to be a son? wondered the Diwan in his apartment, and the Resident in his room, and the servant behind the *rawala* door, and the

man and woman with a lidded reed-basket squatting in the shadow by a postern below the hot-weather cellars a son? wondered the Purohit in his chapel, reading the appointed mantras: a son? wondered the gunners on their haunches by the old cannon of Ranthambor a son? wondered the bard, hopelessly turning over verses in his head a son? wondered the priestly astrologer aloft on a tower but more than any of these, the grey-haired Maharajah, sitting withdrawn and impassive in his courts, wondered whether this should be his son

The Maharani did not wonder, for her wondering was all a tangle of pain and striving

Now the Englishwoman saw her out of a fog of darkness and there was no pair the English lady-doctor was smiling, kindly, a little amused

"It was a son, Maharani Sahiba," she was saying, "a very beautiful boy," and then the first cannon reverberated the shuddering muffle: echo had scarcely died, when the second fired a few minutes, and the third a few minutes, and the fourth a few minutes, and the fifth. Every few minutes a cannon-roar made the lamplight shiver indoors and the moonlight without

The Indian *dhas* brought the boy to his mother and began such birth-rites as they might still practise, though hygiene and medicine forbade much and the Englishwoman had cheated them of their hereditary moment, of low caste as they were while the Englishwoman and her assistant were busy with their instruments.

"The two old women behaved much more civilly than I expected," remarked Miss Manton, at a safe distance "I thought they might be obstructive, or even malicious" She had not been in India long enough to understand the speech

Her assistant looked at her queerly, and evaded her glance

"Why, what is it?" asked Miss Manton "They did what we asked all right? Were they saying rude things?"

Miss da Silva flushed a little under her olive complexion

"I—I would rather not discuss it, doctor," she said

Miss Manton looked surprised, but gave it up "Well, I'll see you early to-morrow," she said "Do you think the women have done yet? Ask them, will you? It's time to show the child to the Resident and the Diwan"

The guns thudded

Miss Manton followed the midwives as they crossed the *rawala* courts, bearing the prince to the agreed spot, where the Diwan and the Resident waited

Here, in the soft light of many lamps, in a pillared court, the child was exhibited and identified by the Indian premier of the State, the Representative of the Paramount Power, and the witnesses of the birth after which the *dhas* went back to the Maharani with the baby, while the Diwan and Resident took leave of one another with ceremony, and Miss Manton accompanied the Resident.

The Diwan went to his master to report, and was ushered into the royal courts

Arjun Lakshman Singh, Maharajah of Surthawara, was seated on rich cushions, on a dais raised by three low steps. He was not a man, nor of very robust appearance. though not yet middle-aged, he looked intelligent and had much dignity. He advanced bowing three times, his hands to his forehead, as one does just upon a birth.

"It is a prince, Maharajah," he said, as the cannon thudded, "a very fine and beautiful child. Miss Manton reports that all is well. The identification was duly performed in the presence of the Resident Sahib and Miss Manton. everything is in order."

"Very good, Diwan Sahib," said the Maharajah. "To-morrow I will go into the city and distribute the bounty to the soldiers. Have you arranged for the fireworks?"

"They will open on the far side of the lake when the cannon cease firing," replied the Diwan.

The Maharajah then dismissed his minister, bestowing on him the purse customary to the occasion. and when he was alone, sat on, thinking of many things, of his first and most beloved and honoured wife, the childless Maharani, no doubt awake in her apartments in the Palace on the hill above the city, listening to the cannon that told her that her lord had a son, not her son of his third wife in her rooms, also in the Palace, the wife he had married just over a year ago, when his second wife had already been ten years without a child. chiefly he thought not of the queens, but of the changed prospect it wrought, that he should have his own son his heir. To-morrow they would present his son to him.

A court officer took charge of the Resident and Miss Manton, accompanying them to the outermost courtyard, where the Residency carriage was already waiting, the coachman in his white uniform up on the box and the young *sais* holding the door open.

The Rajput nobleman, whose hereditary appointment it was to be present in his master's service at the birth of a possible heir, was undisguisedly pleased at the event. He was a good-looking man, tall and spare and grizzled, a soldier who had served in a Rajput regiment, and now supervised the small standing army of the state. Kishan of Reolia, one of the twelve great nobles of the state, a colonel in his prince's service.

"It is a great joy to us to have a son again, after so many years," he said, in excellent English, while the guns thudded throughout his speech, "one of the true lineage, a son for the throne. we thank you for your attendance, Mr. Headlam, and you for your great services, Miss Manton. I speak for all my brothers, for are we not all the sons of one father? This is a great event for us. listen to that dearest music, my young prince's guns—Thank you, thank you, it is good of you to rejoice with us, and now here is your carriage. good-night, a very good-night to you, and pleasant rest after your fatigues."

"Good-night, good-night," replied Mr. Headlam, "we share your satisfaction, Colonel Sahib."

Reolia saluted them, Indian fashion, bowing and smiling, and Miss Manton drew back a hand half-extended, which he had ignored or overlooked. After farewells, they stepped up into the carriage; the door was shut, the *sais* mounted the box, and they drove off.

Miss Manton sat back, tired. She was not yet six months out from England, a tall, neat-figured woman, still young with the long skirts, small waist, leg-of-mutton sleeves and high neck of the style of 1898, one of those new phenomena, a *naïve* woman.

The coachman put the brake on as they went down the long battled way, passing under the pointed arches of several tall elephant gates. The brake hissed, the road grunted, and the guns thudded overhead, as the *sun-ette* of the fort with its crown of *kunguras* rose black against the moon-bright sky.

They emerged into the flat, heading for the nest of radiance six miles down the valley that was the city of Meerapur. It was warmer down here, but still fresh and quite cold.

"What a complication," observed Miss Manton, glancing overhead, "that all rulers must marry, and all heirs be born, in that fearful old place."

"Well, thank God it's over," said Mr. Headlam, pulling up the carriage-rug over their knees. "It is not really late either."

"How much longer will the guns go on?"

"Twenty-two rounds at five minute intervals is the custom in the State. And then fireworks across the lake—but from the Residency we shall not hear the din in the city—Holi goes on till the end of the month, the people will be riotous—You will have a standard by which to dispraise any carnival in the world, when you have seen the end of Holi in Surthawara this year—Was your business all right? no trouble?"

"Nothing irregular—the Maharani was almost exhausted, that was all. The old women were less difficult than I expected—they talked the whole time, but in low voices."

"They talked? What did they say?"

"Oh, I can't follow at all, you know. It did not interfere. I asked Miss da Silva what they had been saying, and she behaved rather oddly. She would not say. I should guess the old things were cursing me."

"Oh, I see! Very likely too—they must have resented you bitterly. Just as well you could not understand. Well," Mr. Headlam dropped his voice, "I was unspeakably relieved to see such a fine boy." He paused, eyed the young woman, and made up his mind. "Tell me, Miss Manton, did you notice anything of a suspicious nature? You realise that I ask you in the strictest confidence."

"I don't think I understand," said Miss Manton.

"It was a fluke that you came in on the case. Premature labour, and Mrs. Holten falling ill all of a sudden, and your just chancing to

be visiting my wife I don't suppose the *dhaus* realized that the lady at the Residency happened to be a lady-doctor, too"

Miss Manton looked at him uncomprehending Mr. Headlam became more explicit

"There was strong reason to suppose a substitution had been planned in the case of its being a girl, or a defective child Did you notice anything?"

"A substitution? but how could they? I mean, one can hardly mistake—Are you implying—with regard to Mrs Holten—"

"The Maharani absolutely refused to have a European woman, in spite of the Maharajah's wishes, till she compromised and Dr Holten was found to supervise her case I have certain reasons for asking if you noticed anything, Miss Manton"

"Nothing—except—" Miss Manton's eyes suddenly came alive in the moonlight—"except that just before the moment of delivery, the Maharani collapsed—Miss da Silva was across the room—and the midwives actually did the job I happened to turn round as one of them laid the child aside—yes, and I did see her, now I come to think of it—" She broke off

"Was there a curtain or anything of that sort near?"

"No Oh no You may rest assured, Mr Headlam Besides, one can't counterfeit a brand-new baby And the old women made no attempt to muffle the child up On the contrary they performed some rites over it naked It would have been impossible to deceive me, Mr Headlam, unless the Maharani had distracted me by being far worse"

Mr Headlam permitted himself a smile

"Now, now, Mr Headlam, you have lived in the East so long that you have begun to think in terms of witch-doctors," said Miss Manton

"You are muddling your continents," rejoined Mr Headlam, "and I would like to point out that the East is not a myth"

"Your villains, I suppose," observed Miss Manton, who was sharp-witted, "would be the ambitious mother, the wily Diwan, the *dhaus* and the mercenary foster-parents Oh, and Mrs Holten, you suspect, in the same class as the foster-parents Possibly the Maharajah"

"No, no, certainly not the old man," said Mr Headlam "For one thing he is straight, and for another, he would sooner appoint a legitimate adoption, sooner choose a promising lad, than risk some village Rajput's son"

"Some village Rajput's son, you say? but what about caste?"

"A Rajput is a Rajput, whether he farms or rules," replied Mr Headlam; "there is no class in India, but caste There is no resemblance Even the most unscrupulous or ambitious Hindu would never break caste he would rather give up his ambitions"

"Dear me," said Miss Manton "If no one ever knew—why?"

"It is the unforgivable sin," replied Mr Headlam "To be paid for through all eternities"

"I shall never understand this country," said Miss Manton "One

would think it was hard enough to synchronise a substitution, without the complications of caste-observation or eternal punishment.—Was there even a reason for Reolia not shaking hands? He did when I met him at the Residency ”

“ You were fresh from a birth,” replied Mr Headlam, “ but no doubt he hoped you would not notice his refusal, or would put it down to some other reason ”

Miss Manton felt angry she was tired, and the guns were thudding

“ Oh,” said she, “ and how long must I wait before that pollution wears off? What priest will ever cleanse me? I am untouchable, am I ? ”

The Diwan, on leaving his master, took the shadowed side of courts and colonnades, proceeding to a destination other than that of the rooms allotted to him for this event. Soon he had passed out of the forecourts shown to visitors, famous for their marble trellisings and airy tower-pavilions and broad perrons. he penetrated the ancient castle which no strangers see, where none dwell, where the marriages and births of heirs and rulers are accomplished, where the stairs twist and are little wider than a man’s shoulders, so that one defender can hack down an army and surprise is impossible, where the moon scarcely penetrates the depth of the courtyards—the Diwan lighted a lantern and in the shadow and dark wended a devious way through the labyrinth, passing at last down the spiral ramp that led below to the hot-weather cellars, great vaults empty save for a flitting bat or two, and at length he came to the postern gate. He unbolted and unlocked it, dragging it open by main force, for it was immensely thick, bound with iron, and shod on the other face with pointed iron stakes six inches long.

Outside, huddled in their padded *resais*, squatted the couple with the lidded reed-basket. They rose, salaaming. They were villagers, an upstanding pair, the man in a roped turban, wearing rough cotton breeches and a long shirt, the woman clad in the short veil, short bodice, and great skirt of a Rajputni. The light of the lantern caught her skirt and it glowed, a brilliant magenta.

“ You hear the guns,” observed the Diwan, “ it is a prince. You may therefore keep the child ”

The woman’s features softened involuntarily, but the man’s feelings were mixed, for he was a poor and avaricious farmer.

“ Very good, Vakul Sahib,” he concurred.

“ Here is the balance of your price,” pursued the Diwan. “ Count it now before me. come inside ”

The villagers shuffled off their shoes and stepped inside the passage. The door was pushed to. The Diwan handed the man a purse, and he squatted down inside the closed door, somewhat sullenly counting out the great five-rupee pieces. wara, ringing the coins down. His wife looked on. she sleeping baby out of his basket.

and slung him in the lap of her scarf where it tucked into her waist, holding him in her arms.

"It is right," agreed the farmer, rising.

"Here is another ten for good measure," said the Diwan, as the countryman pulled the door open, "but remember, if there arises any murmur of this night's doings, you and your wife and your children and your father and mother will surely die and not live"

"Good, good, it is sworn," they said, resuming their shoes, and bowing, strode off softly down the path, patchy with moonlight and shadow, and the woman's full skirt swung out as she vanished round a rock, a flicker of bluish crimson

The Diwan laboriously pushed the door shut and made it fast. It was all concluded and over: the couple were ignorant of his identity and station. He wended back through the summer vaults, up the ramp, through the secret labyrinth of the more ancient castle, back to the open forecourts where visitors may admire the marble trellisings, the broad perrons and airy pavilions of a later day.

Up on the topmost tower, where the reverberations of the guns made the walls shudder, Madho Budh, the astrologer-priest, by the light of a hurricane lantern (though he scarcely needed it in the moonlight) noted with minute precision the disposition of the planets and stars in the celestial houses, together with the course of a shooting-star that fled across the ascendant and having committed it all to paper, he took his lantern and made his way down an intricate series of narrow stairs, his white garments ghostly in the dark places, till he came out into a sort of low open cave, the floor of which was living rock, deep in the bowels of Ranthambor.

Here stood a man also clad in white, accompanied by a lad who held a goat roped by its neck. A crotched stick was planted in the rock floor: on the left was a dark recess and in it, half illuminated by moonlight reflected off an adjacent wall, was a dim grotesque image. On the ledge of the shrine lay the conch-trumpet, while alongside the shrine was propped a long, straight, two-edged blade, gleaming bluish black. The astrologer put down his lantern and waited: half of him golder, in the lantern-light, half of him blue in the moon's ray: and the cannon thudded.

Presently the Purohit appeared: then began a ceremony of recitations by the three priests, turn and turn about, till they concluded in prayer to Durga, who is Kali, the black goddess of death.

"O Mother Durga, mighty one, bane of mortality, spare new life
O Mother Durga, resistless saviour, give peace in time appointed
O Mother Durga, harvester of all things living, quench now thy thirst and spare."

The Purohit then took up the sacred conch and blew into the twisted glimmering shell: and its tuneless melancholy blast echoed among the walls.

Thereupon the neck of the goat, ^{trick} and into the crotch, the blade

flashed in a blue arc, the head fell, and the blood ran out over the rock, black in the moonlight the priest who had sacrificed smeared the idol with it, and when the last prayers had been raised, the astrologer took up his lantern and went away with the Purohit

In a private chamber the astrologer obtained the times from the Purohit and set about casting the new prince's horoscope, his colleague watching and helping, both squatting on the floor

He had not worked far when he stopped and stared at the Purohit

"Dost thou see, Sarangdeoji," he said, "this shooting-star, that was very fierce and fiery and burst at the end like powder its inception coincides with the exact moment of birth I fear what this may portend, indeed I greatly fear it"

The Purohit was also dismayed they pulled the lantern closer across the floor and coned over the houses of the sky again

CHAPTER II

1900-1905

REGENCY

Two years after the birth of Raemall Mahindra Singh, Rajkumar of Surthawara, the Maharajah's third queen also had a son, whom they named Sangram Chandravira He, however, was not born in the ancient castle of Ranthambor, whose divinities were held to be satisfied by the marriages of his father and the birth of the heir at their seat nor did the cannon fire more than five rounds for him, for he was only a second son Moreover, his mother was a woman of humble family and had brought only a modest dower to the royal household

The State of Surthawara partly bordered on the desert It was a third-class state, its ruler having a salute of seventeen guns it was of moderate extent and though now a few hundred years in existence, was accounted a junior among the states of Rajputana It enjoyed a certain honour for the sake of the house from which it was sprung

The Maharajah was a prince whose ideas were commonly described as "advanced" He endeavoured, that is to say, to drain cities, to introduce the practice of Western medicine, to teach the people to read and write, and in general to replace a system of tyranny and intrigue by a system of justice and oligarchy From those who were ultimately to benefit by his reforms, namely, his cultivators and wild hillmen, he naturally obtained no support except what he enlisted in time-honoured fashion by largesse and State shows, for they were dumb souls resigned to their lot through the teaching of their religion if their prince had money to throw away and the village authorities did not oppress them, they rejoiced and reckoned all was well. Processions and paraphernalia they could interpret - but sober economy they construed as ill-fortune Nor did the Maharajah obtain support

from those, who, trusting in their own powers, desired to intrigue and climb and manœuvre a way to wealth, or trusting to their ancient privileges, whether noble or priestly, desired to retain their positions

He therefore found himself much alone in his intentions. He had, however, one helper on whose support he could count and this was his senior Maharani. Like many Indian women, she combined orthodoxy and the extreme of submissive domesticity with a strong character. She came of a princely Rajput family and was neither illiterate nor uneducated, but on the contrary well-read in the Indian classics. She was convinced, from her reading of history and her investigation of old ways of life, that it was an accident and a mistake that Indian women should be strictly secluded or married unduly early. Both these things came of the desire to imitate the Moguls while foiling their desire for wives or concubines. She wished to see women back in their ancient place in Indian life, but it was to be done slowly, in a generation or two, and it was to begin with changes behind the curtain, "till," she said, "the curtain is transformed from cloth to muslin and from muslin to gauze and fades away." She therefore undertook a programme of social intercourse among the wives of nobles and officials, and of relief-work in years of famine, and with shrewd sense she counselled her husband in spheres beyond her reach. It was now more than twenty years since she began this course and latterly, when she travelled outside the State with him, it was her habit to travel not in purdah similarly in the Palace she accorded her presence to distinguished Europeans and to her husband's more intimate ministers with their wives.

Her names were Urmīla Ramabai this second name being given her by her mother who came of a Rajput house living in the Deccan, far from Rajputana. Though she could look with satisfaction upon the course of her life, and though her husband honoured her, still it was bitter to her that she was not the mother of a son. She had urged him to take the second wife, and ten years later the third, but this magnanimity was little comfort.

The second wife, Krishna Lal, the mother of Raemall, was a woman of high family, beautiful and charming, avid of amusement and pleasure, eager after new ideas, yet of an unreflecting orthodoxy. She therefore delighted in the modified zenana life of Meerapur Palace, but discharged all her religious duties punctually, and she became attached to the senior Maharani, seconding her efforts with much enthusiasm but less discretion. Of one thing she had been overpoweringly ambitious, and this was the birth of a son. As the years went by, she instructed her priest to go to Benares yet a second and third time to make offerings and see if he could hear of other rites successfully practised in other parts, for sons. Finally she had undertaken a pilgrimage to Bindraban on the Ganges, where the god Krishna was born among men, and to all his holy places along the banks of the river Jumna, and she promised endowment to his shrine above the city, should she bear a son. The first shadow had fallen across her

friendship with the senior Maharani when Urmila Ramabai recommended the taking of the third wife from a less exalted but stronger stock than hers, or Krishna Lal's, or the Maharajah's own - and when after long disappointment the second wife had conceived—as she was convinced, in consequence of her pilgrimage to the Jumna and her promise to the Lord Krishna—she was determined to have everything proceed in accordance with strict orthodoxy. Moreover, she was determined to realise her ambition and had left nothing to chance. When the Maharajah, the Maharani, and the Paramount Power all—for differing reasons—wished her to have an English woman doctor to attend her, there entered into her the beginnings of a spirit of reaction for, by chance or management, she would be mother of the heir, and have no vassal's daughter queening it over her.

Nevertheless, when it was all accomplished, Urmila Ramabai succeeding in recovering her friendship.

Seven years after the birth of his son Raemall, the Maharajah Lakshman Singh died, and after customary procession and pomp his body was burnt on the royal burning-ground under the north-west wall of Ranthambor.

His will was read in the presence of the Diwan (not the same man as had been in office at his son's birth, whom the prince had come to suspect), the Resident (now one James Macartney), the five chief nobles appointed by custom to attend the event, and, behind a curtain dividing off the upper portion of the hall, the three Maharanis. In this will he appointed the Maharani Urmila Ramabai Regent to rule during the minority of his heir with a Council of Regency which he desired to number twelve, and to which he nominated his present Diwan, the Resident (whoever he might be), the Maharani Krishna Lal, Colonel the Rao Kishan of Reolia and two other nobles. The remaining members were to consist of two Jains, two Mahommedans, and two other nobles, these to be chosen by the three nominated, under the approval of the other nominees. This will was not drawn up in the orthodox Hindu style, for the Maharajah's liberal-mindedness induced him to go counter to tradition. He had added that it was his deepest wish that the Council of Regency should in its own person endeavour to put into enduring effect a constitutional type of rule in the State of Surthawara.

When this will had been duly witnessed, the three women on the far side of the curtain withdrew to their separate households, and in about an hour the Senior Maharani sent a servant across to the courts of the second Maharani, inviting her, if it suited her convenience, to a private conference. Krishna Lal consented and presently followed her messenger.

The Senior Maharani was seated on low cushions (she had no European furniture except a long sofa, whereas Krishna Lal had fitted herself out with a Western drawing-room). Both the women

were dressed in the Rajput style, tight bodices and full skirts. their colour was the white and plain stuff of mourning. the scarf over their heads was not transparent, and their hair beneath was coarsely shorn away

The elder woman rose and taking the younger by the hand, led her over to the sofa, saying, "Maharani Sahibaji, my younger sister, this is a sad hour for us. in another time we would have accompanied our lord through the flames, nevertheless, before the coming of the Moslem this was not the custom among us. In those days widowhood was sorrow but not disgrace. Therefore, let us emulate that older truer India and not repine. There is work for us to do, and it befits us to agree together first of all."

"Maharani, my elder sister, I am honoured that you should call me to you before any, and I thank you for the honour," replied Krishna Lal, seating herself at the other's invitation.

"First, as to our duties as our lord's widows," said Urmila Ramabai, "these I would like to share with you, and indeed I must, for if I acquit the duty my lord has laid on me towards the State, I cannot pay full honours and rites at his shrine, nor observe the fasts."

"Indeed I am grateful to share your duties to our lord," Krishna answered, "for this will ease the sorrow of my heart. but I beg that in return you lay the hand of guidance upon the gift of my lord, Maharani Sahiba, since he is now seven years of age and his education must begin. and I do not feel in myself the experience to settle such matters alone. Indeed, O my elder sister," she concluded impulsively, "in your great sorrow, if it will comfort you, take him to be your son as much as mine."

"You are generous," said Urmila, laying her hand on Krishna's for a moment, "this will indeed comfort me, since he is my lord's, and he shall be in my heart. And I am very glad to see that it does not do mischief between us, that I am Regent."

"Nay, how could it?" rejoined Krishna Lal. "Have I not the great joy and treasure that was denied you? How could I wish more? Moreover, I have no head at all for affairs of business or rule. It is well for the State that you are at the head of it."

"If this then be our agreement," said Urmila, "no tongue of malice will separate us from each other, or from our purpose of continuing our lord's policy in the State, and thus will go far to comfort us, since we have remained behind and have not followed him through the flames.—Now I will send for the Diwan Sahib and the Resident Sahib and the three of rank and we will fix a time to meet and hear proposals for the other six of the Council."

Krishna Lal withdrew and Urmila Ramabai Maharani set about her business of ruling.

The Diwan (the new man), returning home to his wife, said to her, "You have met the Senior Maharani Sahiba oftener than I have. How has she appeared to you?"

"A good woman," replied his wife after a moment's thought. "not impetuous, and not to be put off"

"That is how I see her," said the Diwan. "We shall have advancement without scandal or extravagance under her. She will rule the State like a household"

Mr Macartney, drinking a peg of whisky and soda on the Residency verandah, said to his wife, "The Senior Maharani is going to rule all right. She handles us like a staff of stewards"

Sitala Maharani, the third wife, returning from her evening *puya* in her chapel, where in abasement she had prayed for the soul of the dead Maharajah, met her little five-year-old son, and taking him by the hand led him back to her court. As mother of a second son, as the third wife, and of no renowned family, she had apartments and appointments of much less importance than the other two, scaled down in the proportion that her dowry had borne to theirs. She went into the kitchen and, bringing out the child's supper, fed him. She was a small but well-grown woman, of no particular beauty, but comely, with a sweet expression. The boy was also well grown, rather quiet and solemn.

Afterwards, when she was putting him to bed, she stood him on the end of his *charpoy* and considered him searchingly. The light was very soft, a soft golden light issuing from a lotah on the earthen floor with seven little tongues of flame hanging from the seven-lipped saucer that topped the foot-high pillar of brass.

"Thy father is dead," she said, "thy mother a widow. I have broken the iron bracelet of my marriage. Seldom he came to me, but I too loved my lord, I too would have gone through the fire for him. Thy mother is a woman of little family, little wealth, and little consequence. The Maharani Sahiba has seen many people, but me she has not called. I am on no councils. Yet I too gave him a son, I too can mourn and fast for him. Darling child, I am but thy mother."

The tears came into her eyes and in the soft light they hung like golden pearls on her dusk cheek, she put her shorn head against the breast of the naked boy, and all his life he remembered the feeling of her tears wet on his breast.

CHAPTER III

1905-1908

THE GAME CHITOR

THE two half-brothers, Raemall and Sangram, were playmates, running in and out of the courts of all the Maharanis. Being close together in age and standing, they had for each other a habit of affection. They had other playmates too, for three of the nobles' sons were always in attendance, for spells of six or eight weeks, and the sons of two or three of the Ministers who lived in the city often came up to the Palace. There was also a tribe of five children, the sons and daughters of concubines outside the Palace, but these children born out of wedlock were, and recognised themselves to be, the inferiors of the princes and also of the children of the twelve, for at Raemall's durbars when he came to rule, they would take no position. Even now they could not show their faces in the courts of the legitimate queens. Nor were all their mothers Rajputnis.

Raemall early showed himself to be of a passionate, eager, and imperious temperament. Nothing pleased him so much as to line up his playmates, armed with wooden swords and guns of bamboo, and put them through mock battles, or on the other hand to sit on a stout satin cushion, call it his *gadi*, and hold mock courts, twirling imaginary moustachios. Sangram thought all these games of little interest, but he acquiesced with a gentleness that betrayed an older temperament, and acquitted himself well with the swords and bamboo guns, for even if he was reflective, i.e. was still a Rajput.

There came a day when Raemall was asked over to the Residency to play with the Macartneys' son, the same age as himself, the big seven-years' boy, in his flowered satin coat and his close fitting trousers rucked round the ankles, his embroidered shoes and his cap of embroidered cloth of gold, was radiant with beauty, and with him went Sangram, more quietly dressed, chubby and kind in expression, the Diwan's secretary escorting them.

During the visit, Raemall conducted himself with a faultless composure, inspecting the toys of the Macartney boy with gracious pleasure, playing cricket on the Residency lawn with aptitude, but when the two boys were mounted in the open victoria, homeward bound, Sangram chattered of what he had seen, and of the little Macartney's fair hair and flower-like complexion, but Raemall was silent and seemed to be labouring under some oppression.

At the Palace, Sangram ran off to his mother, exclaiming to her, "But he was pale, O mother! Pale as the great lotus, white and rose, and his hair as yellow as the crown inside the lotus!"

Raemall turned to Subhas Rao, the Diwan's secretary, and said, "Do not go."

He then went to his mother's courts and stood before her.

"Was it well, my son?" she asked. "Did you enjoy the visit, did you play English games?"

“He showed me his playthings,” said Raemall, looking at Krishna Lal Maharani with a curious glance, almost as if he were scowling. She laughed and put her arms round him, caressing him. “And had he anything my lord has not?” she enquired, kissing him. “Is there anything my lord can now think of that I can give him more?” She laughed as she caressed him; but he rejected her.

“He has a gun,” he stated. “He showed me his gun. He is a straw-coloured child, a son of traders, and he has a gun. He is of no consequence and he has a gun, but I and my friends have bamboo sticks for guns. He has also a drum painted in colours.” He stared at his mother and flushed dark with anger. “Am I to be disgraced before a common *feranghi*?” he exclaimed, his voice rising. “I desire such a gun too! I desire a dozen such guns! It has a stock of polished wood and a bright barrel and when it is loaded and fired it goes bang and a cork shoots out of the end!” He stamped on the floor, and the tears sprang into his eyes. “I want such a gun! I want twelve such guns, that will go bang and shoot corks when we fire them! Get me such guns, O my mother! Subhas Rao stands without, tell him to order my guns! From Delhi or Bombay! Order them! order them!”

“Peace, peace,” exclaimed the Maharani, “peace, child! Thy guns come forthwith! They shall come from Delhi or Bombay on the great train, galloping, galloping.” She called for a servant, clapping her hands. “The Secretary Sahib stands without,” she said, “conduct him to my hall of audience—Come, my son, and I will order thy twelve guns and one better than all the other eleven for thyself—weep no more, my son shall have all that any *feranghi* can have and a thousand times a thousand more beside.”

The year of the great coronation Durbar came.

Raemall was then a lad of almost ten years, you would have said a stripling of fourteen. Sangram, though well set, had still the aspect of a child—an open and reflective look. They now spoke English adequately, and were well advanced in their Hindu studies when Raemall should reach the age of twelve, the Senior Maharani wished him to have an English tutor. It will be remembered that Urmila Maharani had taken in hand the elder prince’s education, whose studies the younger shared. Both received regular English instruction, while a priest of the household of the Junior Maharani saw to it that Sanskrit and the orthodox practice of religion were added to these studies.

The Senior Maharani now decided, upon the representations of Mr Macartney, that Raemall should go to the Durbar.

“I am not at all sure that it is wise, Mr Macartney,” she had said, “I know his disposition better than you do.”

“The State, however, ought to be represented, it is one of the notable States, and the work of your husband should be honoured. That is the opinion of the Government, Maharani Sahiba. There are

By two people who may receive this honour. the Maharajkumar, yourself”

“As regards myself, it is out of the question. I cannot reconcile it with my position or duty as a widow,” replied the Maharani. She spoke English perfectly, and herself often supervised the children’s reading of the language. “As to the boy, I will consent, if his mother does. but I much fear the consequences. It will be a scene of splendour and intrigue. often my husband told me of the first great Durbar, which was in the year following our marriage—However, I will moderate things as I can. and if Raemall must go, then I wish Sanga to go too. and they shall go in attendance on their uncle the Maharao of Noorunda. I will not have the prince lead troops, or we shall have trouble with him. I will see to it all, Mr Macartney.”

There is no need for me to describe that scene, surely unsurpassed even by the splendour of the Field of the Cloth of Gold. the sea of tents, like the tents of Tamerlane upon the Oxus, that covered the *maidan* beneath the red stone battlements of Delhi Fort, built by the maneth grandson of Tamerlane, the Grand Mogul. the shivering glitter of diamond aigrettes, the noonday flash of yellow sapphires, the breast-plates of pearls, the unimaginable scabbards, the sheen of satin and the diaphanous shadow of gold-thread muslin, the fathomless crimson of silk velvet carpeting, the swarthy skins and olive pallor, the ermine, the satin white and silk sky-blue, the milk and rose and corn-fair colouring of the English royalty, George and Mary, King and Queen of England, Emperor and Empress of India. Here were manners of incomparable perfection, pride older than any in the world, wits subtler and wills more ruthless than the pale West can dream.

“Who are the lovely children with Noorunda? They are comparatively plainly dressed.”

“Who is that splendid boy?”

“Look at that superb child, riding like a god!”

“This little fellow is finer than any of the great princes.”

“That is young Surthawara. This is young Surthawara.”

“I should be frightened if I had a son like that. No, I would like the younger one. the younger one has everything the other has and more. What a darling, in his simple clothes and his child’s dignity.”

The children returned home to the Palace at Meerapur. Sangram delighted the Maharanis and the other children with his tales of all the doings and the personages and appearances. the chief bard Pabu, hearing him as he sat one day on the garden-steps recounting to the squatting tribe, hailed him as a brother in the art, and himself retired to polish up his verses, which he later sang or recited to his young master Raemall, accompanying himself softly on a drum.

“Thus the young Lord of Surthawara trod the plain of Delhi
A child among the great men, but a prince among great princes
Who is the godlike one, where his sword of lightning?
Rambha herself stooped from heaven for him.”

In the mansions of the moon ne'er will the singer view one fairer,
No, nor the heroes and queens in the mansions of the sun.
The Sacred and Mighty Ones, seeing him, exclaimed,
'Lo, the noon-star is descended dazzling from the heavens!'

Pabu muted his drum with his palm. The Senior Maharam strictly forbade this kind of thing.

"Later, later, Maharaj, when you are a man grown, what songs will I not have cause to sing!" he said. "The old days of prince and bard will dawn again, and my sons' sons will hand down your name with the holy honours of the house."

"Later, when I am a man grown, I will give thee songs to sing, Pabuj," agreed the boy, and left the bard's quarters discreetly.

Nevertheless, after his experience, he was not happy: sometimes he talked of it with high delight, swaggering before his mother or the Senior Maharam or his playmates or the Senior Maharam's ministers, boasting like a child. Then suddenly it was all gone and a rankling entered him. And it might have been noted that his moments of swaggering were when Sangram was not by, and they dissipated if he appeared.

His birthday came, and was kept with lavish ceremony and pleasure—but even on that day his delight was cankered.

There followed a day when he wanted to play one of his favourite martial games, the final battle before the sack of Chitor by the Emperor Akbar. The house of Surthawara was kin to the revered house in whose annals this event occurred, and it was therefore looked on as history on which they had some claim.

Raemall had not enough companions to hand for the game and he therefore combed out the Palace looking for the other children, and lastly he found Sangram sitting under a neem tree in a retired court playing marbles on the hard earth with his friend Kashinath, the son of one of the Jain Ministers. With them was a Rajput boy, one Lunkaran Singh, son of the Rao of Bhadana. They were sitting close together and talking, rolling the marbles only now and again.

"Come, Sanga," said Raemall, at the head of his band, "we are going to play Chitor. We can play here—it is a good place. I have been looking everywhere for you."

"I do not want to play Chitor," objected Sangram.

"We all want to play Chitor," said Raemall, "Lunkaran wants to play Chitor—what are marbles?" He was jealous, for the lad was supposed to be serving attendance on himself.

"Kashinath does not want to play Chitor," answered Sangram. Jains are opposed to the taking of life.

"Nonsense, there was a Jain King of Anhilwara who led his forces in battle—though he refused to march in the rains for fear of killing insects and so lost his war," said Raemall, derisively: then, his impatience rising, "What say you, Kashinath?"

"I will play, since it is play, but it is not a game I like," said Kashinath.

Raemall laughed in triumph

"Seest thou?" he cried to Sangram.

"Still I do not wish to play," replied Sangram "Chitor is a sad and sacred story and no game"

"Ha, it is a great story," said Raemall, standing erect, his hand on the little dagger in his belt "Come now—This time I will be Jaimall and Patta together, I will be Jaimall till he is slain and then I will be Patta Afterwards you can be pilgrims and bring garlands to my statues in the gate—You and you and you I take for my Rajputs You and you and you (one of these was Kashinath) can be the invaders—You," he said to Sangram, "shall be Akbar"

The two little girls of the family were jumping up and down, their long black pig-tails skipping

"I will be Patta's mother," cried one, "and afterwards we will be Apsaras and swoop down to carry off the souls of the heroes to Swarga"

"I am Patta's bride," cried the other and the first catching up two toy swords, called out,

"Now we begin!—My daughter, we will die with our sons and husbands take thou this brand! Patta, put on thy saffron robe this day shalt thou make thy mother's milk resplendent—"

"Be quiet," cut in Raemall, "I want no girls Go and prepare the *johar* get away into that corner"

"We don't want to commit *johar*, we want to die as they two did in battle," exclaimed the little girls *Johar* was the terrible rite by which the women climbed the great funeral pyre within the battlements while the men, in the sacred saffron robe, died fighting in the field below

A shrill altercation arose, the girls, like their ancestresses, as full of battle as the boys in the midst of which Raemall perceived that Sangram was walking away

He caught him up and stood in his path Sangram stopped

"Where do you go?" demanded Raemall, flaring anger rising in him

"Hence"

"Stay and play You are Akbar"

"I will not be Akbar," replied Sangram, drawing in his breath sharply, detesting the name As a matter of course, he and his brother had always taken the parts of Jaimall and Patta, two of the greatest heroes of all Rajputana Akbar was always played by one of the sons of a non-Rajput mother

"I order you"

Sangram stepped to one side and recommenced his road

"Coward!" Raemall flung after him, incensed

He did not stop

"The craven! he dare not face me," proclaimed Raemall to the children "He dare not even play at fighting with me! as if I would use all my strength against him! He should remember I would not let him be not weaker? Aha, there he goes! a Rajput, turning his back

on a toy battle! Or perhaps not a Rajput. who was his mother? a country woman of no descent, some wanderer, no Rajputni, what Rajputni's son ever——"

He did not finish. Sangram leapt back across the court at him, flew upon him, bowled him over, calling him snake, ruffian, dirt: Raemall was up again, and if he was strong, the younger boy was sturdy. the children yelled and screeched and jugged up and down. the brothers rolled and fought and struggled and panted. the dust flew up off the dry earth: the seams of their coats ripped. one of the Rajput boys forgot himself and the occasion, and as if he were at a beast fight or a battle shouted "Hara! Hara!" And in the midst of it all, Raemall muttered between his teeth, "All that, hast thou, and more beside?" she said—the old *feranghi* harlot—more—more, eh?" and since victory eluded him, in a passion of fury he put his hand to his girdle, and then the children saw the flash of metal and blood over hands and coats and on the thirsty earth and their yelping changed to a high howling wail and they fled away.

The whole scene whirled and went throbbingly dark to Raemall and when it cleared off there were bare feet running and an outcry and his brother being carried away by an old subahdar. and there was blood on the old man's beard and his white coat and his sleeves.

He was left staring at the splashes and drops, dry already, on the yellow earth at his feet. a splash or two on himself, red, red. he found the little dagger still in his hand and hurled it out of the arch in the opposite wall, and it flew and with a paltry tinkle bounced flashing in the sun. Far off in the Palace arose cries and wails. He flung himself against the trunk of the neem tree, his face on his arms, and burst into tears.

When that storm was over, he started, a step at a time, towards the further palace. in the passage way he came to a standstill. The noise in the Palace had subsided, but instead of silence there was a subdued sound he knew for humming talk and comings and goings. He glanced back. this side of the pool of shadow under the neem tree, the bloodstains on the earth accused him like dark eyes. They would come seeking him out. He ran back, found the little blood-streaked dagger. He must be rid of it, he must be utterly rid of it.

He was down by the stables.

"Saddle Hayamor," he commanded the chief *sais*, startled out of a nap. salaaming abjectly, the man obeyed, calling his assistants, hustling them, scolding them inside the loose-box. In the neighbouring kennels all the hounds set up an untimely baying.

Hayamor came out, black and glossy, his bridle bright, his English trappings shining, his hooves varnished, throwing up his fine head, pricking his ears back and fore, champing his silver bit, his eyes rolling. The hour was unprecedented—an hour to noon. the prince's wore a civil dress—a long coat and cotton jodhpur trousers. neither hat nor turban, his seams split and his cloth dusty and splashed with blood.

He kicked Hayamor in the ribs, and wheeling him over on his ha-

legs, rode off at a gallop, vanishing in a cloud of dust. He rode as only the Eastern horsemen ride. A cloud of dust hurtling up the hill-tracks.

This was a quiet place, where the rutted track led. There was a great grove of mango trees and that smell, sweetest of all in arid lands, the smell of water and mud. Above the shining-leaved mangoes rose the dry peaks. Beneath them was the black gleaming shadow of water, a low parapet of old grey stone—some antique oblong tank.

Raemall walked his horse up the track, tethered him to a bush, sat, his elbows on his knees, his hands folded together, and gazed down the shadow and the gleaming dark waters of the tank. He drew out the little dagger, slowly. Not looking at it, he cast it into the tank. The green water splashed up and fell back, the widening circles rippled out to the edges, in their heart was stillness, and now all was smooth again as glass.

He sat so a long while, not seeing the two wild peacocks that strolled the length of the stone parapet, trailing their tails, till they perceived him and with harsh cries flew up into the trees. Nor did he hear the flock of screaming parrots that descended on the grove, darting to and fro like incessant flashes of green sunlight, till suddenly all flew away. Nor did he hear the continual hostile cooing of the pigeons.

The noon-hours slipped by.

At length he returned to Hayamor, untied him, and went down the rutty track at a walk. Down there, far below his feet, at the edge of the shining lake, lay Meerapur city, a huddle of thatch and tile and white walls. To one end was the Palace enclosure, the many courts, the flat roofs, the great riding-yard, the gardens. Across the lake rose other dry peaks, jungle fringing their feet. Far up at the head of the lake a hunting lodge gleamed white in the trees. On the lake was an island, with a summer palace of marble and a garden of palms. That was where they went in the hot weather.

He went downhill, the city rising and growing nearer, till he was behind the Palace. He did not go to the stables. Nor did he ride up to the great gate. He made for a side gate.

The guard, who had been squatting on his haunches beside his extinct hookah, talking to another, sprang up and stood to salute, a fine raw-boned man, roughly dressed in a native military costume. The old man beside him was his father-in-law, the old subahdar who had carried away Sangram. That had been before midday. Now it was noon, three or four hours gone.

"Take the horse, Jethi," said the boy to the guard, dismounting. "Ganpatji, my father," he turned to the old man, who had been about the persons of both princes since their babyhood, "with Sangram, what is it? What have I done?"

"He is blind of the left eye, Maharaj," replied the venerable subahdar.

"Blind? totally blind? for ever?"

"For ever, Maharaj."

The boy, without a word, crossed the compound and went into the Palace

The two Rajputs watched him

"Ai, ai," said the old man to his son-in-law, "what a prince have we there and yet to-day's work is only the beginning I love him for his princeliness, and yet to-day we only begin"

Jethu stood stroking Hayamor with a touch of love, reverence and caution

"What a horse," said he, "look what a horse yet see how his eyes roll wickedly"

It was four days before Raemall saw Sangram Sangram went into a fever of twelve or fifteen hours, and even when he was out of his fever, they kept Raemall from him, lest the child should be frightened by his brother The only people who spoke to Raemall were the old soldier at the gate, and the Senior Maharani, who formally called him to her, and with severity and grief said the little that could be said on such an occasion Between him and all the others, even his mother, was a bar of silence All knew what he had done, and how, down to the last sweeper in the city he knew that they knew, and it was silence He bore himself with an expressionless dignity, avoiding everyone, riding down the days alone on his horse Hayamor, followed at a long space by two *sauces* whose existence he ignored

When he saw that the watch over Sangram was relaxing, he bided his chance and one day, having seen the old woman guarding him slip away in the noon heat, he penetrated into the humbler courts of Sitala Maharani where he had scarcely gone half a dozen times in his life, and finding Sangram unattended in a dim cool room, he went and stood by his bed

Sangram lay on his *charpoy*, propped on pillows, and uncovered his head half bandaged and the bandage ran over his left eye and cheek

He opened his other eye and looked at his elder half-brother, giving evidence of no emotion whatever

Raemall's eyes swam in a rush of tears, and with both hands he made to snatch Sangram's hand that lay across him

"O Sanga, Sanga, my brother whom I love, wilt thou forgive me?" he exclaimed passionately "Thou art blind Thou art blind!"

But Sangram drew back his hand quickly and thrust it under himself

After a moment, "Forgive thee for what?" he said, committing himself to no expression

Raemall stared at him speechless through his tears, and slowly, as his brother's meaning entered him, a deep flush mounted his neck and face

"For what I said," he brought himself to say at last, "of thy mother"

Sangram did not reply immediately

"I did not tell her," he finally answered, "others did"

Raemall backed a step, and the tears drained out of his eyes, and they remained fixed on his brother

Then he turned and left the room, and went seeking about Sitala's courts, till he found the place where she was and it was not so far, but he had fetched a senseless circle

She rose, astonished he stood a few paces inside the doorway, unable to move

"Maharani," he said, "my brother told me they had told you what I said, to provoke him"

"Have you been to him?" she demanded, starting anxiously

"I have he is no worse he told me this Maharani, I abase myself before you I eat the dust My neck is under your foot."

He sank his steady glance his expressionless dignity broke, he hung his head like the miserable child he was.

Sitala looked at him, standing thus within her door she went over to him, slipped her fingers among his hair, and turning his face upward between her palms, gazed down at him

"Poor passionate child," she said, "poor passionate lovely child"

Raemall, feeling her touch, looking into her dark eyes, recognised something not in the Senior Maharani, nor in Krishna Lal Maharani Sitala was young, not above six-and-twenty she was beautiful, but her beauty was not more than a comeliness to the eye her beauty was the true essence of Hindu womanhood, and it was not with the eye that Raemall saw this beauty

"Mother," he said, in less than a whisper, his face upturned, "O mother, mother"

"Let us go to Sanga," she said, putting her arm round his shoulders

So he stood before Sangram again, but this time the hands of Sangram's mother, one on each of his shoulders, impelled him to his brother's bedside

"He is forgiven of me," she said, "do thou forgive him too, my son"

CHAPTER IV

1908

THE FINGERS OF MARGSIR

AFTER this, when Sangram was well again, but not going much beyond his mother's courts, it came about that Raemall was often in those courts He was not drawn there only by remorse, which might well have been offset or stifled by pride he was drawn there because in Sitala's courts there was an atmosphere existing nowhere else in the Palace

Sitala kept up no great state here were no half-western fancies, no modern ideas her rooms were bare of furniture beyond a few

rugs, a few cushions, all of fine quality, a few table-legs ten inches high, to take chased metal trays, brass wick-lamps of old workmanship, though electric lights hung from the ceiling her utensils were brass cooking-pots, brass ladles, brass dishes, and she did her cooking herself in her ritually spotless kitchen. Now that she was a widow, counted among the dead, her pots and her fire could be used for herself alone. It was in another kitchen, at another fire, with other pots, that, having washed in Ganges water, she cooked for her son, serving him, bringing him his dishes in two hands, not eating with him. In a corner, in a small alcove, stood her brass and copper household divinities, her mother's little gods, very ancient, their features worn smooth by the worshipful attention of several generations. Above them hung an antique painting of Krishna piping, his flesh cerulean and his eyes bright. In another niche she had a priceless object, a red clay figurine of Siva dancing in a wheel of flame—but to Siva she seldom prayed. And in the centre of her court, on a stone pedestal, grew a *tulsi* plant in a pot, the holy basil. Along the path to her chapel she grew the Indian marigold, for sacrifice.

Of jewels she had few, but they were good, heavily set in the lustreless style of India. habitually she had worn only her bracelets and anklets of heavy gold and her nose-jewel, and on a cord of green silk and gold, an amulet of Hari's Feet, in glowing Delhi enamel, which hung between her breasts where the cloth of her tight-fitting bodice was cut away in a circle. —But now all those were laid aside for her son's wife. she was bare of any ornament, her hair was shorn, she wore no colour but only white, she was a widow, she was dead.

Sitala, then, was a Hindu woman, in her courts were pleasant innocence and peace, and the pervading sweetness of her personality. To these, above all to the last, the tempestuous boy was drawn. There was not much coming or going. Sitala's old priest was often about, reading the scriptures and explaining them, discussing their teaching with her, telling the children the old tales of gods and goddesses. Kashinath the Jain's son came every day to see his friend, and forgave his brother hardly. Sitala's servants were unobtrusive, familiar, and devoted: like all the servants of the Palace, except the sweepers who never entered the courts, they were Brahmans. for only Brahmans can touch food or water and do service and not pollute. At the sweeper's door Sitala used to serve her sweepers herself with food or medicine or clothing, according to their need.

Raemall's vanity and passion seemed to be appeased in this quiet he perceived things and heard of things not hitherto vouchsafed to him. Left to these influences he might have learnt temperance but servile ambitions were in the field.

At first it seemed natural enough that he should go to see his brother but as time went on, it was noticed that he continued to go into Si Maharani's apartments. However discreetly he might go, how unobtrusive the time he chose—and he, imperious and unsuspect

made no attempt at discretion—he could not possibly have escaped observation

Krishna Lal's servants began to gossip ; their mistress was a princess, and they despised the lesser honours of Sitala Maharani and her household

" Is it known to the queen-mother that her son haunts another's house ? " they said among themselves, " is it fitting that our prince should listen to the talk of the third one ? Is it then safe for him to take sweetmeats from her hand ? Will not a mischief befall him ? For what lies between the son of that one and the *gadi* ? Is it wisdom ? "

Some such talk did Krishna Lal's majordomo, one Harbu, drop into the ear of his mistress, and her chief waiting-woman nodded affirmation and bore it out

Then Krishna Lal, in the first stirrings of jealousy, sent for her son and questioned him—where he played now ? did he no longer play so much with the household children ? She had heard his games with them were over—was it true ? did he want for anything ? was he then become a man, that he cared no more for his playmates ?

All this Raemall answered, more or less, but by some instinct avoiding precise admission his clear eyes observed his mother, puzzled, not understanding For one so wilful and so indulged, it is difficult to imagine that jealousy may balk him yet it was jealousy that put in his hand the dagger that had blinded Sangram

" And where were you even now ? " concluded Krishna Lal " It is long since I sent Soondri to fetch you whence come you ? "

" I was with my brother Sangram in his mother's house," replied Raemall, his eyes hardening in expression

Krishna Lal Maharani sat back on her sofa So the talk was true talk

" Is this where you now go ? " she finally asked

" That is where I go," replied the boy, staring at his mother in some displeasure

Krishna Lal saw that she was on dangerous ground it was a few moments before she spoke

" Listen, my son," she said at last " I have no word to say against Sitala Maharani or her son it is right you should love your father's son but you are a prince, the son of princes and princesses "

" We are all true Rajputs," rejoined the boy, with his curious stare, " I have heard it said one cannot be more or less a Rajput, O my mother as old Ganpat Subahdar says, *ek bap ke betan*—all sons of one father "

Krishna was defeated by her son's quick wit she sent him away and thereafter changed her tactics She required his presence continually she endeavoured to keep him at her side, sparing him only a few lessons and his riding, trying to leave him no time to visit her Between determination and astuteness, however, he defeated her often as she checked him and now, though he went to Sitala

"No but he knows that it displeases me"

"It displeases you? For what reason, Maharanī Sahibā? In my house, never——"

"Have I not said? I lose my son. What does he do there? Are you appointed one of his teachers? Are you fitted to teach a son of princes?"

Indignation began to rise in Sitala

"I was fit to bear one," she retorted, and went on, "Forbid him my courts and if he still comes, I will tell him to be gone"

"And then?"

"Then what?"

"Maharanī, I said it before if he disobeys me, will he obey you?"

"In God's name, what more do you want?"

"Distance is surer than behest"

"What is this? Am I to go back to my father's house?"

"If you will"

Sitala became angry but her anger was dignified. She stood

"You ask the impossible, Maharanī Sahibā. I bore my lord a son in wedlock. My place is with my lord's son in his own land. I am not barren. My father's house may not be a princely one, but I will not go back with or without my son, he would bring his men again. I am determined to avenge the insult and what would the Great Raj have to do with such disorders? Nevertheless, I no longer desire to live under the roof of this palace. It is over. I require my own house, or I go home. You have your desire, Maharanī Sahibā — Stay a moment and you shall hear me send my servant over to Urmila Maharanī to beg an interview — Jaina! Jaina! Come at once! Go thou to the courts of the great Maharanī and say that Sitala Maharanī seeks the honour of conversation. Go quickly! Go at once!"

In this way it came about that the third wife, with her son and her household, went to live at a distance of four miles from the city at the village of Pratabgarh. Above the village, which lay on the valley-floor, was a hillock, and on the hillock was a small flimsy-looking pleasure-palace with a ruined garden round it. The little palace was painted a rose-ochre and consisted of two square courtyards. The entrance was by a scallop-arched gate in the centre of the front wall, surmounted by a howdah-roofed pavilion, and at the corners of the building were turret pavilions. There was a wall round the back of the hillock but none in front, where the drop was sheer. There were no windows, but between the pavilions ran screens of fretted stone.

Urmila Maharanī had been highly displeased about the whole business from the Indian point of view, it looked bad. She did not like the behaviour of Krishna Lal Maharanī, who resented her observations and was now again practically estranged from her. Sitala Maharanī was deaf to persuasion though she kept her own counsel about the queen-mother's visit. Urmila was angry that the two boys

would have to be educated separately above all, she feared the effect of the whole on Raemall

And not without reason. On discovering the move, which was kept from him till a day or two before, he had gone into a mood of sullen blackness. He watched the preparations askance, and avoided his mother's apartments. He went riding by himself, with two attendants.

In the evening most of Sitala's servants departed, accompanying the creaking bullock-carts piled with fantastic tottering bales, rugs, bedding, curtains, utensils; the remaining furniture would follow next day at dawn, and in the morning Sitala would go in her purdah victoria.

In the cool morning, having come back down the stone path bordered with marigolds, carrying the basket which had contained the sacrificial rice and flowers of her morning worship, Sitala stopped and looked at the *tulasi* plant, standing in the clear sun on its pedestal in the middle of the unroofed court. The central shoot was broken an inch or two down. She raised it with her finger to its position: it fell down again. An omen. She lifted her arms to the sky, whispering, "Krishna avert! Hari protect!" and then stood tragically fixed, for up there, high in the blue, flew the fatal kite, the bird of Kali.

Sitala became aware that she was not alone. Raemall stood beside her, his eyes also upturned, fixed upon the bird of death, and now he glanced at the broken plant and at her.

"It is an omen," said Raemall.

"What dost thou here, Maharaj?"

"I come to say good-bye, Maharani Sahiba."

"It is what your mother does not wish."

"I know."

Sitala stood looking down at him. All the other times, since her quarrel with his mother, she had sent him away.

"Bid me go," he now said, and added in a whisper, "mother."

"O Raemall, little son, thou shouldst not call me so," said Sitala, remembering the only other time he had so called her, and dropping on her knees, she drew him down against her and sat on the stones under the wall. The pity she felt for him was like a hunger-pang and what he felt for her she guessed, for he buried his face where used to lie the amulet of Hari's Feet, and wept.

Then suddenly he jumped up, his eyes full of tears and laughter.

"But I will come to you both, out there, at Pratabgarh," he said,

"I will come to you! It is not far. It is not farewell."

"No," protested Sitala, "no. It displeases your mother."

"My mother will not know."

"You must obey her wishes, whether she knows or not."

"Aha! You will see, Maharani Sahiba. Who is the master?" and with another laugh he ran away before she could speak.

Before sunset, Sitala's new house was in order and she had cooked in her son's new kitchen and in her widow-kitchen too. She had set up her godlings and lit her *lorahs*: there was no electricity here.

In the early morning she rose and filled her *puja*-basket with what flowers she could find to offer in the household shrine, and returning, looked to see if the twig of her *tulsi* plant had grown together, for she had splinted it with a matchstick and cotton before bringing it away. but the twig was quite withered up

Sitala had moved into her new house in the bright half of Baisakh, when the hot winds were breathing. her domain was by no means displeasing, but it was lonely. On the terrace before the house grew a fine peepul tree, but now it had dropped all its leaves and stood naked in the heat. there were also two leafless flames-of-the-forest, grey and twisted, one still bearing bunches of brilliant flowers. On it flourished a bee-orchid, its long hart's-tongue leaves green and glossy, its flowers heavy-scented, but this was the only green thing to be seen

On the second day of Jeth, early in the morning, Sitala stood on her terrace, sadly looking to the left where shimmered Lake Gogunda and the white palace-topped city to the right, less distant, where the mountains closed in, rose Ranthambor upon its crag. In Ranthambor she had been married, above Gogunda she became a mother, and here she stood beside a sacred peepul, widowed

None the less she had joy in her son, and here was a satisfaction for she had successfully concluded his betrothal to a girl new born among her father's kin. Her priest had seen to it and the astrologers deemed it a favourable match. The Senior Maharani had approved. The bride was found, and in the house she desired whatever might come, that duty was done

She turned, with a sigh, towards the rose-ochre house in the scalloped archway stood two boys who, as soon as her eye fell on them, made obeisance, saying, "Hail Rambha, Goddess, Queen of the Apsaras!" It was Sangram, and with him Raemall

"Raemall!" she exclaimed, shocked but diverted, for in her awakened grief she had forgotten the joyous festival. "Wicked child! What are you doing here? You should not be here!"

"Yet am I!" he returned, impudent and pleading. "It is my morning ride. I go galloping, galloping along the mountain. I start in an opposite direction. My *Thakur* boys I do not want, to-day Maharaj rides alone. my *saises* lie hidden above. I sought out Jana, and no word will leave your household."

He strutted about, vastly pleased with his cunning, and threw his arm round Sangram's shoulders

"I miss thee," he said. "What do I want with the sons of my nobles, when I have not the son of my father?"

Sitala could do nothing. he was well-conducted and full of delight. he disobeyed her blithely. what could she do? Soon he was gone again, scrambling up the mountain, his khaki invisible among the boulders, the bare earth and the burnt grasses

Above, on a hill-track, he took his black horse Hayamor from the

two Rajput *saises* He mounted, and wheeled his horse to face them, blocking the way Hayamor reared as he spoke

"Hearken again, Ratan, Pem Singh. hear well You have sworn to me yet if any word of my coming hither goes abroad, as surely as I shall one day be your ruler, so surely will I burn down your houses, deface the memory of your fathers, give your bodies to dogs, and send your wives and children out of the land I have said it"

He stared at them, astride his tall black horse, a handsome child, and grim

He came again many times, even though the Senior Maharani saw to it that Sangram visited at Meerapur two or three times a week Krishna Lal would have liked to see a house much farther off allotted to Sitala; but the Senior Maharam had the decision, and she intended that later on, when an English tutor was found for Raemall, Sangram should come in and out every day thus she might avoid separating their education Pratabgarh suited this plan very well, and relieved her of some vexation

June wore down into July the hot winds blew, and heat lay on the land like the hand of death When Sitala stood on her roof-terrace, under the howdah pavilion, and looked down the valley to the palms of Gogunda, or up to the peaks above Ranthambor, all was now pearl-blue with the haze of heat below, the roofs of the mud-walled village shimmered and danced in the arid plain was often, at noon, a silver splash like a sheet of water, in which the peaks opposite reflected—but no water was there By day the stones and bare earth seared the sole of a naked foot by night walls and rocks radiated a vibrant heat

But inside the little palace it was cool tatties of *cuscus* hung at door and window, sluiced at intervals with water to go out was to enter a furnace, and only in the morning and at evening did Sitala and her boy go up on the roof Then Sitala would lie on a thin rug, while the boy sat on the parapet, and Jana squatted gossiping with another servant in one of the corner-pavilions and Sitala would take her *bina* and from its curious strings draw a melody of wandering fascination, like a kettle singing very perfectly, and to her tunes she sang ballads or lullabies or the songs of her people, in a throbbing, nasal voice, powerful and sweet In this hot season she sometimes sang the *basant* songs and the *megh* songs, the songs of the spring and of the cloud-gathering these Sangram most loved She sang and played beautifully, in the manner of India with her dark golden skin, in her great Rajputana skirts of stiff muslin, in her tight high-bosomed bodice, short-sleeved and cut away in a circle between her breasts, naked-waisted, a scarf over her shorn hair, she looked like an antique painting

"Why have not all men such a mother as thou?" asked Sangram, creeping up to lie close against her, as the light grew level and the quick twilight fled

Then at last, in the intolerable climax of dry heat, the skies darkened

and lowered and after a boding sultriness, the rains broke, at first in drenching showers, then in a mighty downpour. The earth reeked to heaven with a scent like the mercy of God. the rain bounced in thumbles on rock and stone. it streamed down thatch and mud wall it sang like wild bees. tawny torrents roared down the deep-cut nullahs and yellow cataracts sprang from the hills. The village tanks were filled, the green sap stirred, the sopping peasant drank from his cupped hands, the water-buffalo rejoiced. men laughed and raised their voices to be heard above the thrash and drumming of the rain.

In that high land, the temperature fell quickly. when the rains were over, in August, at the end of the month Bhadon, the earth began to steam and ferment and hosts of insects hatched from the mud and standing water. Below Pratabgarh had come a marsh.

Sitala Maharani took a fever, like an ague, at first intermittent, but then it became a quotidian fever. She used drugs, quinine and other brews. but though she abated her fever, she did not mend it. With the autumn came cold nights, and with the lamps of Diwali the first frost. Sitala took her fever again. She forbade gossip of her fever, desiring no kindness from the great palace and no modern medicine. The month of Kartika declined into Margsir, and there was talk of a great Christmas party to be given presently at the Residency in honour of the royal and noble children, for the Macartneys had two or three nephews and nieces in the house.

Margsir with his night-frosts burnt up the cannas in the Residency flower-beds, he set needles of ice in the water of the mountain tanks, he spread a hoar glistening on the peaks, he touched the sleeping coolie huddled in his wadded *resaz*, and he huddled yet closer in his wadding.

Margsir laid his frosty fingers on Sitala Maharani, in the rose-ochre palace above the winter marsh. under his frosty finger, in the bright half of the month, she entered upon a great shivering. Then at last they took her from her bed and laid her on the earth. and with the passing of Margsir, she died.

CHAPTER V

1912-1916

THE SPRING BOAR

THE years slipped by, bringing with them a political disaster for the State of Surthawara, for in the year 1912 the Senior Maharani also died. This meant that the chief power fell to the hands of Krishna Lal Maharani.

Krishna Lal Maharani was well pleased with the honours of her position, as queen-mother and Regent, but she was, and knew herself to be, incapable of rule. Her brain could not grasp or cope with the difficulties either of reaction or progress. it was clear that she was

the quarry of advisers, and the question was, who would have her ear and direct her power?

Colonel Rao Kishan Singh of Reolia, himself a man of moderately advanced views, considered that policy should chiefly be directed by himself and his compeers, the great feudal lords of Surthawara; and to the execution of this, he was content with the existing composition of the Council of Regency. If he was moderately advanced, however, all his compeers were not, and many of them, having watched with secret discontent the pruning of their powers and the taming of their mulitance by the late Maharajah Lakshman and his wife, now saw a chance to re-establish their independence. Not, of course, completely at the expense of their future ruler, about whose promise they were already enthusiastic. The loyalty of the Rajput to his prince, fractious as it may be in peace, and always equal and independent as it is in character, is nevertheless absolute and intense.

Krishna Lal Maharani, a princess of another house, did not desire to establish a supremacy of Surthawara nobles. To her they were foreigners—she did not know the men and scarcely knew their wives—she knew she would be a cipher in the State if they had the power, or, as she put it, “I will not make them masters of their Prince.” The quinquennial change of the Resident had occurred shortly before the Senior Maharani’s death—the new man was just too diffident in character to handle the situation successfully,—indeed, he was in need of rest and had been appointed to Surthawara because it was one of the least difficult States to handle—and in any case he was too lately installed to have learned the ins and outs of local politics at first hand.

It therefore came about that Krishna Lal gave ear to her old friends and the familiars of her household. She could not at once retire the present Diwan—but the son of that Diwan who had prepared the substitution of a male child, should she give birth to a daughter, was appointed as a tutor to the princes. The household priest assured her, with no uncertain voice, that the misfortunes of the house—the early death of the Maharajah, the sudden death of the Senior Maharani, the partial blinding of Sangram, the death of his mother, the death of the rich bride to whom Raemall had been betrothed in infancy, the temperament of Raemall, and a failure of the rains—had all one cause, and that was the impious policy of rule.

It was impious, said the priests, to interfere with the workings of Karma in altering the conditions of outcastes or women or even dogs and peacocks and cattle—impious to give outcastes access to wells, to introduce women into the general company and affairs of men, to exterminate diseased dogs or crop-devouring sacred peacocks or to interfere in the breeding of the holy Cow. These lived the life of favour or penance which they had earned by their conduct in their former incarnation. charity is good, but interference in the laws of God is sacrilege. It was impious, said they, that the chief widow should desert her duties of mourning and retreat, and the rains had failed

because the spirit of her husband was angry. The very acme of impiety, said they, resided in the fact that in Surthawara it was largely held that the Kshatriya caste of warriors was superior to the priestly Brahmins. This was a heresy of several generations' standing. Finally, it was the prevalence of impiety, said they, which deformed the character of Raemall. How should the child not be passionate, luxurious, and eager for new things, when he saw on every hand neglect of the gods, their agents, and their ordinances?

This was a language Krishna Lal could understand. She put her duty as a widow first. She engaged to expiate the past and to regenerate her son by gifts to temples, priesthoods, monasteries and hermits, by pilgrimage, and by acts of asceticism whose intermittence she retrieved by her lavishness in the other directions. By degrees she came to rule in all departments, great and little, at the dictation of the holy ones.

Raemall now grew to be eighteen years of age. This age represents the attainment of royal majority in India as in England, but the Raj defers the assumption of power to the age of twenty-one.

Raemall's birthday, it will be remembered, fell in the month of Phalgun, during the festival of Holi. This month was also the customary month for the celebration of the Aheria, the great Spring Hunt of the Rajputs. Krishna Lal Maharani had greatly circumscribed her son's life as a rider and hunter during his minority. For one thing, his secret visits to Sitala and Sangram at Pratagarh at last reached her ears, though fortunately Raemall never came to know this. And for another, she got it into her head that his life was in jeopardy from the anger of the gods, and consequently the youth could hardly stir a finger without the celestial will being consulted. Under this treatment, over a period of four years, he became rebellious and disrespectful, and the outbursts were many and lamentable. These outbursts reached their climax when the Great War broke out, in 1914. Raemall was then only sixteen, but finely grown, and he was all afire to raise troops, be a Colonel in the State, get as near any available fighting as he could, and like the men of the English heroic age, win on the field that knighthood which would otherwise become his as a mere matter of course. His mother vetoed the scheme and hampered the raising of troops in every possible way, partly because she knew that Raemall would become even more unmanageable if troops were raised and he not the chief mover, and partly because her spiritual advisers were averse from her helping the Raj, which they saw as one of the chief agents in the undermining of their ancient supremacy. Raemall, after his bootless campaign of 1914, subsided into a dark and deceptive calm which promised little good for the future.

Sangram fared much better, for Krishna Lal not only took no interest in him, but was jealous of him for his mother's sake. She therefore threw him as a sop to the Resident's representations on the subject of the boys' education. He was allowed an English tutor, and it was understood that he should travel and train for soldiering in England or France or Austria. She had arranged for him to study

separately from Raemall from the age of twelve "My son," said she, "outstrips the little one Ask their teachers' opinion, Resident Sahib."

Raemall extremely resented this difference. he envied the freedom which neglect allowed his brother, he envied his future experience and career, he envied him the Englishman His pride obliged him to cover his envy of these things He needed Sangram's affection and his company, but envy often made him deny himself He was surrounded about equally by his mother's familiars who reported to her his conduct to gain her favour, and by persons who indulged him where and how they could in the hope of his favour when he should come to rule

Among his major flatterers was the chief bard Pabu Krishna Lal Maharani, unlike Urmila Maharani, was quite content that her son should enjoy the company of the bard and his brethren, for listening to bards is a comparatively stay-at-home occupation Raemall, prevented from much activity, eating his heart out for deeds, drank deeply of the heady draught of glory and romance Most days he would go and play with the arms in the fabulous armoury of the Palace, and once a week he attempted to wield the huge heavy exercise-sword of his ancestor Jaswant Lakshman Singh Jaswant of Surthawara, who successfully opposed the Emperor Humayun all his days, had been a mighty man and for an hour a day had twirled this two-handed iron blade around his head It was four feet long and an inch and three-quarters through And weekly, since in his boyhood he had felt the first prickings of manhood, Raemall came here in a secret rite, known only to himself, the old soldier who kept the armoury, and perhaps to Sangram, to pit himself against the sword of Jaswant

"Pabu," said Raemall one day, when he was seventeen years and ten months old, "in two moons is the moon of Phalgun What does Phalgun of this year bring to the lips of the *pat-bardai*?"

Pabu was now a man of fifty or so He twirled his moustaches and his eyes lit up He reached for his drum.

"Rajah Lakshman led his Rajputs
In fierce foray against Rankot
Wolf and tiger sweep on Rankot
Hara ! Hara ! sword on buckler
Air with lances thick and singing
Smoke and wail from Rankot rising.
Through the pass they lug their plunder
Now the well-tuned tongue of glory
Sings the *tika daur* of Lakshman"

Pabu looked at his young master, grinning suggestively. but Raemall frowned at the opening of the ballad of the *tika daur* of Lakshman

"Thou art vexatious, Pabu," he said moodily "Thou knowest very well that in these days of the Raj I cannot celebrate my coming of age with a foray against Rankot or another"

"No, indeed," agreed Pabu in sarcasm, "in these days of the

virtuous Raj we are all emasculated We all smoke the hookah of idleness while the sword and the spear rust. There is no *tika daur* for thee, Maharaj."

They were silent a moment, and Pabu's fingers pattered on his drum.

Their eyes met, and a faint smile dawned in each

"Think again of the year and of the month," prompted Raemall.

Pabu smiled slyly and took up his guitar He tuned and plucked the strings "Maharaj," he said, and began in a high sing-song.

"Arjun, lord of Surthawara
Coursed the sacred boar in spring
Lo his lance flies like the levin
Lo his brand a thunderbolt —"

He broke off, his eyes bright with anticipation

"This year, Pabuji, I will give thee a song to sing," said Raemall, very pleased. this was the opening of the saga of the Spring Hunt of Arjun

"For this year my lord is a man grown," agreed the bard, "this year by right he should ascend the *gadi* of his fathers This year if not before should my lord recruit his Rajputs and lead them forth to fight for the Great Father who reigns across the Black Water, whose sight was gladdened already by the face of my lord when he was a little lad ten years and more ago"

Raemall's expression darkened

"I will never recruit my Rajputs to my standard in this war," he said, "unless it continue till I am twenty-one, when even the Raj will admit my manhood My Rajputs go to this war, but they go in the regiments of the Sahibs I bide my time, Pabuji the years of tutelage go slowly, but I bide my own time Yet this year I will celebrate the Aheria in Surthawara, I will hold the *Mahurat ka Shkar*, the star-appointed Hunt, and you shall make a song of it, father of bards I have said it"

"Will there be no objection from the queen, my prince's honoured mother?"

"There will be objection"

"If my prince were to demand again his Rajputs, he would get his hunt," suggested Pabu

Raemall looked at the bard, and he smiled, and he uttered a laugh, half cynical, stroking the silken down that was darkening the olive smoothness of his upper lip He was lying on a rug, his elbow propped on a cushion, lumber and powerful, like a leopard at ease

"From thy lips I ever drink poetry and guile, Pabuji," said he

Krishna Lal Maharani put up a point-blank refusal to her son's renewed plea to recruit a body of troops. The question made storm in the Palace for a week

"Am I then to stand disgraced before my brother princes?"

demanding Raemall in the final engagement, "I who am a man grown? I do not know why I defend the Raj indeed. were it not for the Raj, I should have my Rajputs under arms as I chose from the end of Phalgun of this year. Yet I am now of the age when the sons of the sahibs may enlist: why not I? Bikaner leads his troops and Jodhpur sends his Rathors across the Black Water. I too bowed in fealty to the Great King: but my Rajputs cross my borders to enlist under an alien standard. I am hemmed in by the machinations of priests and the fears of women, I am tied hand and foot. Do I keep my horses Hayamor and Manuka and Kesar Kali tethered like goats to a post on a yard of string? My face is blackened before the world as for thee, O my mother, does not the milk curdle in thy breast, to have thy man son trot his horses for exercise and loiter about the palace?"

Krishna Lal was upset and insulted by this speech, but she kept to her refusal.

"When thou art acknowledged a man by the Raj, thou shalt defend the Raj as thou wilt," she said, "till then thou art under the rule of discipline and wisdom."

Raemall became angrier, enumerating all his disabilities, and concluded by accusing his mother of ill-faith, of grasping power, of a desire to enfeeble him, to make him a half-wit and a palace-lubber, until at last his accusations reduced her to tears.

"My son, my life, it is not so," she cried. "I have but one desire, to school thee to master thyself and bring thee safely to manhood. Thou knowest the tempest of thy heart. Have I not ever given thee all thou hast required? except to let thee risk thy life for nothing? Hast thou not horses and falcons and elephants and the new motor-carriage and guns from the great gunsmiths? Are not thy polo-teams already renowned? Art thou not famous for thy marksmanship? and thy horsemanship? and for thy learning? Does not many a man's heart quicken in the field and many a woman's in the courts at the naming of thy name? Who gave thee all these? Ask me thy heart's desire, I will grant it with joy, so it be not troops nor to cross the Black Water with thy men."

Raemall eyed her, stroking his fledgling moustache.

"I am indeed loath to believe evil of thy heart, O my mother," he said at length. "Very good so be it. Since I may not yet ascend the *gadi* of my fathers, this year shalt thou nevertheless let me celebrate one of my honours. Let the priests consult together and let the astrologer appoint the hour of the day for the Spring Hunt. let the invitations go forth to my nobles and to such princes as thou wilt, to hunt the Aherna with me this year, the year of my manhood."

Krishna Lal Maharani gazed at her son, her breath suspended, her eyes round and blank but her woman's thoughts revolving intricate and rapid behind them. She was quit of the spectre of the alien war, at least for the present. She had shot her bolts of refusal. Never

before had he hunted the wild hog It was a danger of death Yet he excelled in lesser chase and in polo and tent-pegging and such sports She was meshed in her promise She was afraid of him, standing there watching her, stroking his lip, his anger watching like a fierce hound on orders to sit There was that other necessity the priests were urging on her that must be done his consent must be obtained and the Resident kept in ignorance If she granted this, he would more easily be persuaded to that

At length she dropped her eyes and spoke

"It is not in my heart to refuse thee any thing," she said "I will instruct Madho Budh to consult the stars and I will set the pen in the fingers of Harbu, to invite thy vassals and thy peers for the *Mahurat ka Shikar*"

Krishna Lal Maharani, having that other thing to ask of her son, stunted nothing, once her mind was decided She indulged him to the peak of his wishes She stifled every prompting of fear and super-stition regarding the danger of the sport ahead The new Resident—again the five yearly change had taken place—was formerly an Army man, and himself a powerful polo-player and pig-sticker Raemall desired that he should be invited to come himself and bring what friends he cared He also desired that his mother should quit her purdah and mourning for the occasion, to the extent of entertaining the Residency ladies upon the roof of a hunting-lodge in the hills, which lay on the path of the great drive Discovering that the Resident's wife was a marksman, he lent her a beautiful rifle and issued instructions that three tigers should previously be trapped, to be driven past the lodge in good range and at proper intervals none of this was left to chance, nor was the measure divulged to the Europeans

To all this his mother consented, having that request of hers in mind

On the day preceding the great hunt, there was a ceremonial reception appointed at the Palace, held in the Hall of Public Audience, to which came all the guests of the morrow There were three ladies from the Residency with the Resident's wife, Mrs de Travers, and they were conducted by a separate route to a gallery above the hall, where they could see without being seen Colonel de Travers, with his brother Captain Humphrey de Travers and two other sporting gentlemen, were with the two princely guests and the feudals in the hall

Raemall intended that this ceremony, the giving of the green, should serve as a token of his accession and coming of age It was all planned to the smallest detail precedence was exactly established and the gifts exactly graduated He did not himself stand, nor sit on a cushion he occupied a chair of chased silver, half oriental and half western in design, at the head of the wide steps, and his brother Sangram stood

by his shoulder. At this age, they were grown further apart than at any other time. Raemall was already in his manhood, but Sangram at sixteen was still the stripling. Krishna Lal, out of jealousy, had tried to prevent Sangram's riding in his brother's hunt, on various grounds, but Raemall was angry at her manoeuvre. She dropped the matter, having that thing to ask of him. Now she also watched them from a gallery.

Coats of green, marvellously worked, turbans, cummerbunds, parts and portions of attire or whole suits, all in green, were bestowed on each man who was to hunt the Aheria, and a great shield of favours was sent out for all the hunt-hands by the prince's chief hunt steward, his shikari, Makhani Singh.

Raemall performed this ceremony, and said what he had to say, with grace and dignity. First came the representative of the Raj, then the visiting princes, then his brother, then the vassals and the Englishmen.

In conclusion, Raemall stood and made them a speech of promise for the morrow, inviting them to join him in slaying the enemy boar in sacrifice to Gauri, the goddess of crops and plenty, whose insignia of young green they would wear, and finally he dismissed his court, the first court of real men that he had ever held. He smiled, stroking his lip, watching the last man backing down the hall, remembering the courts of children that he had held under the neem tree. He glanced up over his shoulder at Sangram. Sangram took his meaning, and smiled too.

Mrs de Travers, at the foot of the Residency dinner-table that evening, was talking of the ceremony. The Residency was in part an old palace, and had some very fine rooms.

"One of the loveliest shows I've seen," she was saying, looking very pretty with her puffed hair, her white shoulders, her laces and frills and her little waist. You would never have imagined her to be a sportswoman. Her age was forty-two or three. "And I never realised before that Indian women see everything they wish, even if they are not seen."

"Some Indian women," qualified one of the men. "Depends whether you are poked away in a city or not. A merchant's wife in a city alley sees precious little."

"For those women, at any rate, you could call it a seat in the dress circle," said one of the other ladies, Captain de Travers' fiancée, Miss Barbara Gould.

"To have seen that show through a grille of marble," resumed Mrs de Travers, "is an experience. All green, and crimson carpet, and the silver chair and marble pillars, and more green and more green. I shall always treasure the green scarf young Surthawara sent up to me, that young man, so smooth and so magnificent——"

Her husband laughed, and the white-robed butler happening to leave the room, he observed, "Your indiscretions will all go back to

his Highness, you always forget that Fakir Mohammad understands English, my dear"

"He is certainly a fine specimen," said one of the men, "in fact, most of them were pretty fine men"

"He is the most splendid young man I have ever seen," said Mrs. de Travers positively "Anywhere," she added

At that moment Raemall was for the first time supplanting the priests in the Temple of Siva above the great parade-ground in his capacity of prince and arch-priest, he was conducting the Office with consummate grace

Mrs de Travers would have suffered a curious shock, had she then seen the prince engaged in his offices before the monstrous Lingam of Siva the Destroyer

Six o'clock in the morning the hour appointed by the stars and interpreted by the astrologer Madho Budh for the beginning of the Spring Hunt of Raemall's coming of age The beat had begun over-night the hunters assembled in the smoky dawn

The Indian and European ladies, aloft on the flat roof of the hunting-lodge in the hills at Badol, were awaiting events and entertaining one another as best they could It was by now eight o'clock *chhota hazri* was handed to the guests Krishna Lal Maharani and her half-dozen ladies had little or no command of English, and the English ladies, like most of their kind, had imperfectly acquired imperatives and the familiar forms of kitchen Hindustani, which was scarcely adequate to the present occasion Mrs de Travers fortunately happened to possess the rudiments of polite speech she knew a few non-kitchen expressions, and she used the formal pronoun and this, with Krishna Lal's handful of English, prevented the situation from being unmanageable

The English ladies thought the Rajputnis very gorgeous, with their great skirts and their silk muslin head-scarves and their heavy jewels, their crimson-dyed palms and soles and hair-partings they were slightly perfumed with attars and oils which are repellent to the Western nostril, accustomed to volatile picnic scents The Indian ladies thought the European women looked like peeled wands, and their smell was as uninteresting.

The English ladies were shown over the lodge by an elderly court officer who was in general charge He was in fact a Jain, the uncle of Sangram's friend Kashinath They came to a curious court, deep as a well, with a walk and elbow rail all round the wall in the four bottom corners were low strong doors and the floor was loose earth and tanbark

"What is this?" asked one of the Residency guests

"A bating-pit, madam," replied the Jain.

"A bating-pit! What animals do they match? Are there often batings?"

"They match chiefly the hog and the tiger It is not often used ;

but sometimes a show is put on for some guest who is not very active, or to amuse the ladies "

"Pig and tiger—I should never have thought it. I suppose the tiger normally wins ? " said Barbara Gould, her voice betraying her conviction that baiting was poor sport and such a combination none at all

"On the contrary," replied the Jain. "The pig is the most dangerous of animals and practically always wins. Always, in fact. The tiger must spring, but the hog rushes and rips sideways "

Presently something broke on the ear, scarcely a sound. In a few moments, it resolved itself into a far-off din. Somewhere up the valley, between the peaks, were the horsemen flung out along the peaks and across the valley, far above and below, were the beaters

Before the lodge was a vast clear space, all stones and burnt grass. scrub and thorny jungle, dense or in patches, and still leafy, climbed mountain-sides

The din was so far off that it was as yet scarcely a noise. but even as the women watched the space and the jungle, a great black cobra came from the right-hand and flowed swiftly up the valley, vanishing among bushes on the left

"Krishna protect," muttered the Maharani. It was surely an omen

The din was now a great din, indecipherable, coming chiefly from below and around. the Maharani's waiting woman Soondri came up and spoke to her mistress. The Indian ladies drew to one side, lifting their veils across their faces. Soondri, also veiling herself, introduced two men into a far corner. They were Mrs de Travers' loaders, and they carried cartridges and the beautiful rifle

Now the animals began to come, trotting. the nilgai, the great blackbuck, a couple of fleet chunkaras. peacocks flew. various deer, red and spotted, and a porcupine, hyaenas, hares, wild dogs, jackals. The din was closing on them, yells, drums, clangings, and the animals were running faster. The first tiger came, swiftly padding, belly to the ground. Mrs de Travers fired and missed. There came a drove of pigs, snorting and squealing in a cloud of dust, and in the cloud followed a second tiger. Mrs de Travers fired and wounded him. he leaped ahead and in two bounds reached the brush

"He will be taken, Memsahib," said one of the loaders, grinning from ear to ear. "Later we get him "

Now the confused herd was galloping, the pandemonium was terrific: in the dust, beyond the rout of galloping bodies, almost out of range, Mrs de Travers saw a glossy, purplish blackness streaking by. she aimed, fired, and a great leopard sprang high in the air and fell dead in his tracks.

"Hara! Hara! Shabash! Shabash, Memsahib! Shabash!" shouted the loaders, wildly excited, and yelled to others below who, the moment the surging game thinned out, darted across with ropes

and canvas and dragged in the singular prize The third tiger was never sighted

The Rajput women were almost as excited as the loaders at the prowess of Mrs. de Travers down below in the lodge was an admiring babel, where servants, shukaris, and two or three of the tribe of bards appraised the victim

Last of all to cross the clearing was a huge boar, trotting by himself. his coat was rusty orange, his tusks curled over his cheeks and under his eyes like scimitars, he stood high, his shoulders like a bull's, his quarters narrowing steeply He trotted grunting to himself, his little eyes rolling, his whole person indescribably malignant, and of a sudden he turned at a right angle out of his trot in a flat violent gallop like a careering cannon-ball the dust flew from his thrumming hooves and the bushes cracked as he rent them.

"Vishnu protect! Siva defend!" gasped the Maharani, and all the women, European and Indian, felt a nausea of fright and excitement

The crashing din had now come up to the lodge and passed up above Badol Mrs. de Travers and the European women went below to see her prize, while the Indian ladies went to a grille above the game-court The great leopard lay stretched on the stone floor of the courtyard, lovingly arranged by the shukaris with his head propped up and his tail stretched out as occurs sometimes with black leopards, he was large above the average, almost as big as a tiger, in his prime the noon sun striking through the purplish-black gloss of his coat discovered the square spots of his tribe yet blacker in his darkness His eyes were open and still bright, like topazes Barbara Gould stooped and touched him and lifted a heavy paw he was warm and supple, and she drew back abruptly, aghast at his beauty

Having given the Mems time to admire, the assembled men broke out into eager talk, explaining their incomprehensible chatter with gestures—now the square head, the long tail, the paws of the great cat but above all, again and again, their fingers pointed out to the ladies, and to the lady, and to one another, the blood-rimmed bullet-hole placed where the skull joined the spine

"You're a magnificent shot, old girl," observed one of the Residency ladies

"Ah," smiled Nancy de Travers, "it's all done by the Maharajah's rifle—Well, now I'm off to settle my wounded tiger, or some beater will tread on him and be mauled," and no protests would stop her presently they saw her walking off into the scrub with three shukaris and four beaters with ropes and canvas, in her neat short-skirted khaki shooting-suit, her green scarf covering her topee, the ends knotted and dangling down her back

Towards half past ten, when Mrs. de Travers had been back some time, with her tiger, the uproar of the hunt returned down the valley, nearer and nearer, the same confused din, but added to it this time was the noise of the chase itself Rapidly the thunder and shouting

bore down to Badol, half a dozen pig shot across the clearing, and a moment later the riders burst into view from three sides. They came carcering down the open patches on the stony mountain-side, clearing crag, boulder and brush at a breakneck gallop, bounding like stags and nimbler as goats, green coats, green sashes, green turban-tails flying. The fastest horses spun out, looped far below Badol, rounded the quarry, and back came the drove of yelling hogs in a cloud of dust. The waiting riders rowelled their horses and flung them into the charge: the hogs broke through and the huntsmen swept after. The shikaris ran out and with swords and spears finished off and fetched in one or two animals and re-mounted a rider whose horse had been bowled over by a charging pig. There was now blood on the rocky soil.

They had scarcely done, when the pig galloped by again, again followed by the hunt. This time they were headed back and held before the lodge. The hogs charged like cannon balls, jinking at right angles in full gallop. de Travers got his third pig. Kishan of Reolia was unhorsed, and the pig with his sideways rush ripped up the flank of his horse and turning, charged the man, who stood like a rock, his sword drawn, bled the blade in the hog's neck, and then darted out and mounted a fresh horse. Here was a man with a lance through his thigh, there a pig squealing in rage and agony: wherever you looked was blood and battle and death and shouting.

Then went up a single shout, followed by a sudden silence. The great orange boar had been flushed and was tusking and thrusting in the mellay, swords slashing his tough bloody hide and his iron muscles. He was the king of boars, a shoulder higher than any, heavy as a thunder-bolt, fighting mad. He yelled, he was enraged, he rushed out, with his bloodshot eye he selected his victim, now this man and horse, now that, and charged, the incarnation of murder. They could not get him. He flashed like lightning, he came in to charge again and again, the lances broke, the swords missed, one blade shivered on his tusks. Two horses he slew and one man in the trampled, blood-clotted dust.

Then there went up another shout, like the crack of a volley of muskets. The boar had jinked in his gallop and ripped out the tendons of a horse's hind leg. Horse and rider were down, tangled together, the horse screaming and thrashing, the rider struggling to get his feet and draw his sword. The rider was a boy. He could not win free but he dragged out the blade and with his face in the dust he heard the drumming of the charging hooves, he lay still, watching the bolt in the dust. Snout, tusks, red eyes were upon him. He struck. The ripping fangs missed their aim.

The onlookers yelled as the pig ran over his mark, flashed through the rearing horses and turned in again for the murderous charge. But this time the field had opened and a horseman, lance balanced, was charging the charging boar, racing him to the tangle of horse and boy.

"Hara! Hara! Maharaj! Maharaj! Kesar Kah!" yelled the mob and the field. Horseman and hog flashed together, the lance ran

true through the hog, he swerved, staggered, and fell, spitted from collar-bone to guts, and the steel head of the spear shone between his buttocks

This was the end of the hunt the lesser pigs had been killed or had got away Raemall flung himself off the rearing Kesar Kali and ran to Sangram in the dust He cut the knots of stirrup and rein with his sword, and dragged the youth free

"Well done," he said, "it was good art thou hurt?"

Sangram was, by a miracle, uninjured, but he was tired completely beyond his strength Raemall supported him to the lodge, shouting to Makhan Singh, "Shoot the horse!"

Then came the great business of dressing the hogs and eating the enemy of Gauri on the hunting field The royal cooks and scullions had all moved out with their tools now they lit stoves and fires and fell to A convoy of camels bringing rugs and fresh linen and other matters had come up to Badol to transport the bag as the rangers brought it in the guests and great chiefs retired into the lodge to freshen themselves

From the roof of the lodge the ladies watched the scene, the fleshers at work far across the clearing, the coiling smoke and the smell of burning wood, the weaving host of servants, and nearer, under awnings or in patches of shade, the hunters lolling on rugs, smoking and talking, bearded and dark skinned, in their tattered reeking green, enjoying the luxury of fatigue and down there squatted the shikaris, the bards, the camelteers the *saises* groomed and watered and fed the foam-flecked, dust-clogged horses, and sometimes a huntsman rose to see how his beloved steed did, and congratulate and caress him, the horses whinnied and stamped, the camels jingled their bells and watched with supercilious composure

Raemall himself, accompanied by two or three, went to see how Kesar Kali did Two *saises* were rubbing down the horse, and detached from them stood a ragged turbaned boy of fifteen or so He was watching the grooming attentively and yet with adoration

Raemall approached Kesar Kali, calling him by names of honour and endearment, running his hand with tender expertness over his legs, and then caressing him

"Does thou know what thou hast done to-day, prince of horses?" he said. "Thou hast saved a prince of men"

His eye fell on the boy

"Who art thou?" he said

"I am Bikramajit, the son of Durjansal of Dol."

"Who is thy father's overlord?"

"The Chief of Sehwan, Maharaj"

"He is the Chief of the sept of Barsingot Art thou then Barsingot?"

"Yes, Maharaj"

"And why dost thou stand here?"

"Maharaj, for the sake of the beautiful horse."

Raemall smiled, and encouraged, the boy added with shy boldness, "I too have a horse, Maharaj."

Attracted by something in the boy, Raemall said, "I will go with thee to see thy horse," and with parting instructions to the grooms, he went down the lines to the far end, surprise and obeisance springing among those along his path.

Among the last groups, the boy fell on a tall gaunt Rajput, dragging him forward by the hand.

"Father, father," he cried, "the prince himself comes to see Toran."

Durjansal of Dol saluted his prince with that combination of respect and independence which arises out of equality in all but the smaller counts of station and possession: and father and son led the prince and courtiers, not to the country nag he expected, but to a short-backed flea-bitten grey of excellent breeding and in excellent condition.

"He was given to my son by the Chief of Sehwan," explained Durjansal, "to whose son my son did a service. He was a sickly foal but my son nursed him as a woman her sick child, and since we have little possession, my son works with a farmer to earn Toran's grain." Durjansal's affectionate pride in his son was of the same order as Bikramajit's in his horse.

"Ride him," commanded Raemall.

The lad flung a folded blanket over the horse and vaulted up. He showed off Toran with delighted pride. Toran's accomplishment was clearly a work of love.

"Is he not beautiful, Maharaj," exclaimed the boy, leaping down. "Is he not beautiful and clever, my darling, my little horse?" The boy had no thought but for his horse, that had done so well. Raemall patted the horse's neck, and then he stroked the lad's cheek.

"Toran is a beautiful horse," he said, and continued, addressing Durjansal, "I will have a word with Sehwan about your son, to train him in his household, the plough is too lowly for him," and then, perceiving Pancham his head groom on the fringe of the group, he added, "Pancham, I will have an allotment of *channa* and *chokar* each a *maund* sent up monthly and lucerne a bundle a week to the house of Durjansal of Dol from the Palace stables. See thou to it." Turning to the father and son, he added again smiling, "I will see at once to the matter of speech with the Lord of Sehwan," and when they had thanked him, added further, with his eyes on the boy, who had already turned to his horse, softly telling him of the grain and lucerne to come, "Later, I will remember thy son for myself, Durjansal."

Mrs de Travers suddenly became aware that a man had joined the Indian ladies. It was Raemall, followed by Sangram, come to pay their duty to the Maharani. Krishna Lal congratulated them with delight, and spoke with anxiety, horror, and admiration of the final battle with the great boar. When they had paid her their duty, Raemall excused himself correctly and came across to Mrs de Travers. Both

he and his brother were in their torn riding-suits, but their linen was fresh and they were otherwise point-device, without jewels, save the pearls in Raemall's ears

He bowed

"I come to bring you down to the gentlemen," he said, in his courteous English, and then added, less formally, "Mrs de Travers, may I congratulate you? Your magnificent leopard I am overjoyed. It was a fine shot, a wonderful shot, perfect. And the tiger you went after." He paused, and his eyes flickered over her face and hands. "With three shikaris and four beaters, yourself the only gun. I salute your courage, madam."

Sangram added his congratulations. Mrs de Travers paid tribute to the excellence of her rifle. She then went over, with the Residency ladies, to the Maharani, and thanked her for her hospitality, saying, now that Raemall was there to interpret, all that she had a mind to say, congratulating her on her son's shikar, his bravery and accomplishment translating which, Raemall had the grace to smile a little self-consciously.

Down below, she had to accept endless congratulations, where her leopard and tiger were arranged together. Photographs were taken, composed of all possible combinations. herself, the rifle, and the game. herself, the shikaris, beaters, rifle, and game. herself, both princes, rifle, and game. herself, husband, and the Residency guests. the Resident, princes, and princely guests. the prince and his great chiefs. the chief guests. the chief chiefs. and so on, and so on.

"Why do they all shout 'hurrah' out here?" Barbara Gould asked Colonel de Travers during one of the groupings.

"They shout 'Hara,' not 'hurrah,'" replied the Resident. "Hara is their god of war and our soldiery picked up the cry in the days of the East India Company. And Hara was Herakles."

In time, the feast was ready to be served to the whole hunt, outside the lodge. Carpets had been spread. The men sat cross-legged to eat off silver plate with their fingers. Great trays of meat dressed with rice were borne round, and trays of sauces and salads.

The Residency ladies ate at a table on a verandah overlooking the scene. But their men were with the Rajputs.

The Maharani, seeing this intention, had sent for her son and endeavoured to dissuade him. For it was a breaking of caste. No strict Hindu eats with those of inferior caste.

"O mother," he had replied, "we are Rajputs and we are not dishonoured if we eat with soldiers and hunters."

Krishna Lal expostulated, but did not make an issue of it, for she had that thing to ask of him. Besides, through her priests she would make his sin good with the gods.

Twilight fell soon after six o'clock, but the scene was lighted by torches, flares, hurricane lamps and garlands of coloured lights.

The Palace ladies had gone home in their closed carriages. The English women stayed on and watched, seeing and hearing all from

the passing of the *mumawwar piyala*, the hunters' cup, to the finale of extempore couplets by the chief bard Pabu and his fellows

After this, the European party rose to go home. The men were riding, so also were Mrs de Travers and Barbara Gould. The other ladies were motoring. The horsewomen retired to change, and emerged habited in black, in full English hunting-rig, top hats and all, to grace the occasion; Mrs de Travers wearing her green veil.

Mrs de Travers, waiting for her horse beside her husband, found Raemall with her. She delivered her compliments and thanks, and passing to a less formal strain, said, "Tell me, Maharajah Sahib, when your lance ran into that great boar, what did it feel like? I can never believe it is not a shock."

"It felt like running through butter," replied Raemall.

Her horse came up. Colonel de Travers stooped, locking his hands into a stirrup step for his wife, and she flew up into the saddle. Raemall had not seen European women mount before, nor ride side-saddle, as many then still did. He observed everything closely, and thus happened to see also that Colonel de Travers put his hand over his wife's for a moment and whispered for her alone, "Clever girl, Nancy good girl," and smiled at her. He had not congratulated her in any other way. Barbara Gould's horse now came up, and Humphrey de Travers, who had been standing with his fiancée, mounted her in similar style, and here the sharp eyes of Raemall perceived that they were lovers in a sense new to him. The carriage had gone ahead, the men mounted, the Residency people rode off into the dark.

Much later the Indian cortège rode in, acclaimed by a tumultuous mob, while fireworks fizzed and flared overhead, and the water-god Varuna dived into the depths of Lake Gogunda.

Late that night, Raemall waited on his mother, to give her thanks.

"Was it well, my son?" she asked, soft and indulgent.

"It was very well, O my mother."

"Art thou happy?"

"I am more than happy, I am elated."

"Maharaj, my son, my son a man grown!"

"Mother and queen."

Pabu came to him, and he gave Pabu a great gift, a purse of money.

"Have I given thee occasion for a song, Paburi?" demanded Raemall.

"Maharaj, Maharaj, were the tongues of all my fathers to sing in me, I could not make a great song enough of the hunt of thy coming of age."

Raemall smiled at him.

"Old flatterer," he said, "ever honey and guile," but it happened, and he knew it, that Pabu's flattery was sincere.

But these, his mother, his familiars, his enthusiastic vassals, did not satisfy him. Before all of these he kept up a face

He went to his brother's quarters

Sangram was in bed, covered with a sheet and thin blanket - there were no mosquito-nets, it was not yet the season. There was a small single wick burning

"Not asleep?" said Raemall, sitting halfway up the bed

"No," replied Sangram. His eyes were wide in the dim golden light, and he looked younger than his sixteen years, but drawn

"Thou art overtired," said Raemall. "I should have sent thee out of the hunt early"

"I would not have gone"

"Who is thy master?" said Raemall, with a teasing swagger

"I have a brother but no master"

Raemall looked at him, free of the rankle of envy for that day he had saved his brother's life in a bold and perfect deed

He rose and sat against the head of the bed, pulling the lad up to lean against him

"Thou art not hurt in any way, Sanga?"

"Not in any way"

"*Mahurat ka Shkar*, it is over. Thou hast ridden valiantly, little brother. It was a man's chase"

Sangram, after a moment, turned and looked up at his brother

"Thou art a great horseman and hunter among men, Raemall," he said, and Sangram's praise was the sweetest of all

CHAPTER VI

1916-1918

OF BRIDES

AFTER this came the great festival of Holi, which, including as it did the anniversary of Raemall's birth, was celebrated with particular splendour and abandon. From the day Phag, when the carnival entered the *rawala*, to the last day Punon, when the great kettledrums in the triple gate summoned the chiefs and the citizens to the ulung field, it was all a riot of crimson - the ladies and princes in the *rawala* attacked one another with crimson powder and jets of crimson scent. The Holi was played on horseback in the Palace yard, when the horsemen hurled packets of crimson powder at one another - and on the Punon, in the open field, royalty, nobility, and citizenry all rioted in crimson together, respect was abolished, the peasant could mock the prince. In all the villages, strangers, European or Indian, were stopped on the roads by crimson-smeared gangs singing rude songs, and neither rank nor dignity could save the visitors from the jests of the girls or the blackmail of a rupee or two. In the city, on this last night, frenzy became orgy - children screamed and danced and worthy men roamed the streets - bonfires were lit and the Holi burnt and

songs raised in praise of Holika fireworks flared and laughter flew in gusts and all was red and noting crimson

But on the first morning of the month Chait, had you been on the bridge spanning the end of Lake Gogunda when the sun stood three hours in the sky, you would have seen the crimson-stained citizens come from the shadow of the trees among the temples and go down into the lake along the length of the marble steps, men and women, to wash and lay aside licence Barefoot, fresh-clad and sobered, the man goes to his business, the woman to grind her family's grain in her quern, squatting in her cottage yard It is late, it is three hours since dawn belated on the first morning of Chait business opens and the querns sing their grinding song in villages and towns

When it was all over, when the last ceremony of all was done and Raemall, like other masters, had received gifts on the morning of Chait, according to custom, from his once more respectful servants, he felt the world, his world, flat, tame, empty, and yet something was fermenting far back in his mind, that he could not bring out

He rode out with some companions, not for long, for it was growing hot he returned and read a little he took himself alone to the armoury

Old Sheodan Singh rose and salaamed, following his young master

Raemall idly took down and fingered the old matchlocks, clicking their catches ran his finger-nail over the gold and silver inlay of famous swords and daggers inspected the autographed spears of great deeds in great battles or great hunts

"When will my lance come from the goldsmith?" he asked the old man "I am looking forward to seeing my signature inlaid in gold among this company"

"To-morrow, Maharaj, to-morrow, in a day or two," replied the old Rajput, proudly smiling at the story of the deed of that year's Aherna Still smiling, he preceded his master to the glass case where the iron sword of Jaswant reposed on its velvet Raising the lid of the case, he went on, "To-day is the day my heart tells me it will be to-day It will fall to my lord to wield the sword that none has wielded since Jaswant had it forged it will fall to none other" He spoke with caressing respect his prince was still a child to the old Rajput

Raemall came to the iron sword of Jaswant, and with precaution lifted out the great weapon

"Times have changed, eh, Sheodan?" he said "Five years ago you used to take this out for me and then you saw me just able to lever it up from its point"

"Now Maharaj will brandish it like the great Jaswant," said the old man, smiling and stroking the parting of his strong white beard

Raemall had carried the sword to the clear centre of the hall and now laid hold of it with both hands, its point on the ground He raised it up under his thin coat the muscles of his arms and shoulders

knotted, the muscles of his neck tautened, the cords of his wrists were like whips, his skin went ivory pale on the knuckles, and on his temples the veins rose and the sweat beaded - he raised the iron sword aloft, but he could not brandish it around his head

"Not yet," he said, and bore it back to its velvet

"And how should it be yet?" rejoined the old captain, closing the case "My lord is only just crossing the threshold of manhood, but the foe of Humayun was a man grown My lord will brandish the sword of Jaswant on the day appointed, to-morrow or another day, very soon and then he will restore to us all the glory of the ancient days"

Krishna Lal Maharani sent for Madho Budh the astrologer, who was also an excellent astronomer of the Indian school he held the post of Superintendent of the Astronomical Gardens of the city, with its numerous instruments, the great gnomon, its pillar eighty feet high, the marble zodiacal gnomons, the equinoctial spheres and armillary spheres and the other famous and curious devices

"Consult the stars, learned and holy one," said she, "find me a propitious time when I may ask my young lord the thing I have to ask"

Madho Budh, he who had cast Raemall's horoscope in the hour of his birth, retired to his charts and his nocturnal observations, and appearing on the morrow, with folded hands duly apprised the Maharani of the propitious hour

Upon that hour she sent for Raemall and he came in a pleasant mood Krishna Lal's confidence rose. the hour must truly be propitious

She took the talk around by way of the recent celebrations, admiring Raemall's behaviour and deeds, passing on the praise of others, drawing him into expressions of satisfaction and gratitude and a boastfulness of the future which did not ill become his qualities of person and mind and she flattered his boasts

"Yet there is one thing lacking to thy manhood," she said

"And what is that, O my mother?" Hope sprang up perhaps she had thought things over, and would allow him to become colonel of his own body of troops, perhaps he could yet earn that knighthood but most of his fighting men had enlisted across the border Not all of them had priest-ridden mothers to rein them back

"Now that thou art embarking upon the sports and dangers of a man," began Krishna Lal persuasively, "it behoves thee to beget a son, to take a wife to thy manhood There was a bride destined to thee, but she died, thou knowest it Yet I am guilty towards thee, that I have not married thee, that I have left it so late. nevertheless two years running the chief priest Sarangdeo has been to Benares, to hear of a bride for thee but most are betrothed, as thine was. Now however he has found for thee a maid, thirteen years of age, in a royal family The dower is good. and the horoscopes match in all respects,

in every detail they are made for each other the marriage is indeed preordained. It is high time, my son, to take a wife "

Raemall said nothing his face was expressionless

Krishna Lal went on again, taking the absence of protest for assent.

" The girl is comely, of high descent, she reads and can write and is educated in the wisdom of the gods, she comes of the house Phaldevwar. The marriage is in every respect desirable, it is ordained of the gods yet one thing I have to ask of thee, and that is a favour of thy love, my life till all is duly contracted, I do not wish that the Raj should have a say in the matter "

Raemall made no immediate rejoinder

" Why so ? " he asked at length

" The Raj, my son, is not understanding in these matters The Raj considers matters differently and not in accordance with what is our procedure Thy marriage must have no stain of impiety upon it With thy consent, the contract which binds can be entered into without interference Thou knowest, my son, that they are in the most sacred matters the enemies of our customs "

Raemall stared at his mother

This was the woman who, four short years ago, under the influence of the late Maharani Urmila, had seen the wisdom of later marriage for children, of some choice in the matter of husband and wife, had within limits dispensed with purdah, had planned English tutors and tours for her son in addition to his Hindu classical studies, had gone in for works of emancipation and progress in the State All that she had abandoned under the guidance of her priestly directors and star-mongers, he had watched it all, bound like a fly in the web of her piety all that, and now this

" Can I see the girl and talk with her ? "

Krishna Lal sat up, outraged

" My son ! but thou knowest ! Impossible ! No man meets his wife till he has taken the seven steps And what wouldst thou get of talk with a young girl ? She is clay to make thine, but she is true in the Hindu faith, to become as thou desirest her, to serve and honour thee "

" Will you show me a portrait ? "

" Nay, impossible ! How can we tell the priests and the elders of the house of Phaldevwar that we trust them not ? It would be a knife in the heart of their honour and pride Be reasonable, my son ! "

Raemall rose suddenly to his feet and paced off up the room He had come to his mother in a good mood, he had been led to feel pleasure and gratitude, he had been flattered, and then struck between the eyes As he paced away, old tales of other customs shimmered in his imagination and then abruptly there leaped out that thing that had sturred at the back of his mind all those days, that he had not been able to bring forth he saw again the charming face and sweet eyes and slight hands of Mrs de Travers—but those eyes had sighted the rifle he gave her on her leopard at the limit of range, those hands had

held the rifle steady and fired the shot that entered the base of the skull: he saw again what there was between Humphrey de Travers and the girl he was to marry—the thing the old epics knew—another thing than lay between him and the dancers and singers that his stewards, on his mother's instructions, had brought him in the last four years—he saw the two English women, one dark, one fair, sitting graceful, accomplished and self-possessed upon their horses

And they were offering him an unknown girl of thirteen, who might be swarthy and timid and dull, who was pious—no doubt a hearer to priests and stars—who could read and could write

His mother had called him here, had talked agreeably to him, had deluded and cajoled him—and now it was to be a bride of thirteen

Anger rose in him like jets of flame. He turned round and strode back

"No," he said, with violent constraint "I refuse. I will not have it. Hand and foot you tie me and will tie me till I come of age, but I will take no wife till I am come of age, till I am as strong as Jaswant, till I am my own master, till I choose. I will marry no child of thirteen. I will appeal to the Raj, do you hear? I will blacken our faces with scandal and rebellion, rather than take to wife a stranger or a child. Never speak to me again of this matter till I ask for a bride. Harken well, O my mother. Harken well, for I have spoken. I will not marry till I choose."

He left the room, stormy and furious, and from that moment dated an estrangement between mother and son which lasted with little intermission many years, nor did he ever feel cordial towards her again. Krishna Lal was left to reflect upon the fallibility of Madho Budh the court astrologer—in her anger she summoned Madho Budh and railed upon the venerable and learned man with an abusive volubility that would have done credit to a village matron.

The thoughts of Sarangdeo the chief family priest were perhaps the sourest towards his prince, for he had been appointed a large commission from both sides of the match.

But Raemall heard no more of brides.

When all this had subsided, Raemall endeavoured to secure his mother's permission to attend the sittings of the Council and to have some say in the affairs of the State. The latter she simply refused, for she had not the wits to manage a course of compromise, and having decided for the rule of her priestly advisers, she had fallen entirely under their dictation, finding in the conviction that she could not err if she pleased the gods the obstinacy to refuse the most urgent representations of the ministers or the Resident. As to attending the sittings of the Council, he was permitted to sit with her behind the curtain. It did not take much of this ignominy to anger him to such an extent that he swore he would never attend a council again with her, and thus confirmed their estrangement.

"*Ya sīlah ka an*," he swore, swearing the great oath, touching the

dagger in his sash, "by this weapon, O my mother, never more will I hear the Council sitting by your side behind the curtain I have sworn"

He never went back on his oath. The time came when his mother tried to persuade him to sit and listen, for the Resident had an interview with her and reproached the invisible woman with failing to educate the prince in matters regarding rule and the last thing she wanted was outside interference, or an understanding arrived at between the Resident and her son. He kept to his oath, cold and angry. In the year before his accession, however, the Resident put it very strongly to the young Prince that he should be present at the Council meetings and Raemall, who saw the sense of it perfectly well, consented to attend, but, fearing the mortification of his mother's opposition, he sat through every meeting in complete silence, refusing to take any part whatever and seldom raising his eyes from the table. His oath remained sacred, for he did not sit behind the curtain nor with her.

Two years after his Indian coming of age, when Sangram had also turned eighteen, Raemall, having nursed the business all this time, had spoken to him of brides. Sangram was now himself a young man, well grown and of a kindly countenance, not handsome. He was a Rajput in all that becomes a Rajput, but he had always a predilection for the society of quiet and thinking men. The Maharani's neglect continuing, he was free to keep what company he chose. Jains, whom he liked above Hindus, Muslims, Europeans, men of various creeds and occupations. It was Kashinath, the Jain's son, who introduced him to Raghudeva Rao, a middle-aged Jain recluse who kept a shrine of Ganesha in a banyan-grove above the city, a friendly man of wisdom.

Raemall knew of the man and sometimes went up incognito with Sangram. He called him Sangram's *guru* of the banyan-grove.

Raemall had never spoken of his mother's proposal of a bride to Sangram or anyone else. But now that Sangram was a month gone after his eighteenth birthday, and the question of his military training was coming up (the War was entering its last stages), while preparations for his Indian tour were almost completed, he said to him, "What of your marriage, Sangram? You are eighteen and a man. Has not my mother spoken to you of it?"

"No. Will she do so?"

"I have no idea. Your bride is waiting."

Sangram's face clouded.

"Yes," he said, "I have a bride waiting. But she is only ten years old."

"Will you keep her waiting till you are done with your travels and your training? That will be what the Raj prefers."

"I do not know. I have no desire for marriage."

Raemall knew that Sangram had never kept even one dancer, though twice or three times he had had dealings with the girls about the palace, not continuing. Krishna Lal's indolent indifference prevented

her from attempting to corrupt him - also, as she had in the main surrendered his education to the Raj, to the Resident and Rajput governors chosen by the Resident, she would have stood answerable to the Raj

"Oho," said he, twirling his moustaches, promising now to grow black and handsome, "is your old *guru* making an ascetic of you? Take care! If I fail to sire sons, there will be no monastery for you"

"I do not know that I am for a monastery either," said Sangram, smiling

"So your banyan *guru* is then turning you towards such thoughts? Your bride will not thank your *guru*"

"No," said Sangram, not smiling now, "my bride will not thank me"

For no other man may marry a girl that has been betrothed: she dies virtually a widow, virgin, unwed - her soul unmade, forbidden from Heaven

Raemall was jealous that Sangram should be setting out on a tour with his English tutor. He himself had set out in October last upon such a tour, eventually conceded by his mother under strong pressure from the Government. He had got no further than Lahore, when telegrams fetched him home. The pundits had cast the horoscope of his trip day by day, and had suddenly discovered a conjunction so fatal to him, that he was ordered back post-haste. But no stars penned his brother at home. Still more was he jealous that no attempt was made to marry Sangram to the girl betrothed to him. Then again, he was sorry for Sangram, tied to an unknown child. Death had at least freed him of such a yoke-mate. He would not be a party to pressing on the marriage.

What he planned of marriage for himself he did not vouchsafe, nor did Sangram inquire. For all the pleasure he took with the girls his mother found for him, and for all the custom of his day, he cherished a hardly acknowledged hope of some match more like the old romances Pabu knew. He almost envied his village kinsmen working in the fields and pastures, whose women veiled themselves and retired before the stranger - but who might be met at the wells or on the tillage. One heard of princesses who had come out into the world, not Rajput princesses, to be sure - but perhaps. He saw that his mother indulged him in order to hold and rule him, and he saw that she was encouraged in this by those that held and ruled her and hoped later through her to rule him. He took carelessly what they gave, despising them and their instruments, and kept the other hope secret even from himself, like a child that hoards a sparkling stone in a box. Most of the time he pretended there was nothing there, it was a matter of indifference. He would rather swing the sword of Jaswant, than have a bride. Then he would think—when I swing the sword of Jaswant, when I am a man grown, then, then perhaps it will so fall out. There was bitterness in the secret he kept even from himself.

CHAPTER VII

1919

PROMISE

A YEAR after the end of the first great European war, Raemall came of age, and ascending the *gadi* of his fathers, became in fact His Highness Raemall Mahindra Singh III, Bahadur, Maharajah of Surthawara. His coming to the throne was a business of tremendous pageant: his twelve premier nobles attended the ceremony, as well as a host of lesser vassals—they did homage for their fiefs—each played his hereditary part, Kishan of Reolia, for example, in the right of his ancestors, laying his hand upon his lord's and conducting him into the hall to the steps of the dais—a reward to his seventh grandfather for loyalty in his sovereign's misfortune.

Afterwards, according to custom, he proceeded to the *rawala* to be received as ruler by his mother and all the women. Krishna Lal embraced and blessed him and made a speech renouncing her power. A day or two later, on an informal occasion, she referred to this scene and to the preceding ceremony, which the women had watched through the lattices. She spoke with a mother's flattering emotion. Raemall heard her out and then said,

"I am now ruler of Surthawara, O my mother, and the great war is over. Who knows if there will be another war in my time, in which I may prove myself the son of my fathers? Do you know what else I would have been, had you allowed me to raise my troops myself and give them to the Raj, instead of leaving them to enlist for themselves under an alien banner? I would have been a Knight Commander of the Indian Empire, His Highness Colonel Sir Raemall Singh, Maharajah of Surthawara, with a salute of nineteen guns at Delhi."

His knighthood was gazetted in due course. "unearned," said Raemall, "just my school-leaving certificate."

Liberated at last from the leading-strings of his mother and her advisers, Raemall made haste to burst into the arena of life. What were the things he had wanted? An army, horses, travel, sport, arts, women, splendour. All these spelt one word, Renown.

Raemall was talking one day to Sangram, who was on holiday from the College for Princes, due to go the following autumn to Sandhurst, and in his boastful but not unattractive way had expressed his desire to make his mark on his generation. He did not express himself precisely, but his gist was very clear. He wanted advice without demeaning himself to ask for it, and as usual had come to the one quarter from which he knew he would get an opinion free from interest and flattery, to the one person who would not gossip over his coming, nor presume nor trade on it, the one person before whom he cut no figure.

"What dost thou think, Sangram?" he concluded. "The times have passed us by. We are a race bred to arms and gallantry. Time was, when I would have celebrated my coming of age not by a hunt

but by the *tika daur*, and followed up with battles against the invader For centuries Rajasthan has lain across the path of the invader but now we go a-hunting and compete in peaceableness "

"To my mind," replied Sangram, his reflectiveness tempered by his natural charm, "the *tika daur*, like the continuing expense of a marriage and other of our customs, was a custom of doubtful value If one was at feud with an ill neighbour, it was well enough for a new prince to prove his mettle but so often one was at peace with a tolerable neighbour, and it was a wanton grieving."

"And thou a Rajput," rejoined Raemall, half vexed, half teasing

"For my part," observed Sangram, smiling in rather a rascally way, "I am for peace with other men but war upon myself"

Raemall shook his head and laughed

"I am too simple for these philosophies," he observed "I like assailants I can see and get to grips upon Well, I have missed one war, maybe I shall not miss the next Meanwhile, what, pundit?"

Sangram looked at his brother thoughtfully With characteristic grace Raemall now stood at a window, propped against the wall by his elbow He was dressed in a knee-length coat of plain dark blue cloth buttoning to the neck, and white cotton jodhpur trousers His puggaree of coral muslin lay on the window-sill He wore pearl earrings and on one hand a gold ring with a ruby these ornaments laid a barbaric emphasis on his virility He stood about five foot eleven in height His hair was dark and glossy, with a loose curl to it, his brow broad, his eyebrows level his eyes were dark and large and keen, his nose high and straight, his jaw a little bony, his lips full and chiselled. He was clean-shaven but wore a young moustache His skin was fine and smooth as a woman's, of a light golden brown His hands were well-shaped His build was light and strong; but though the muscles might knot and leap up with this or that exertion, in repose or mulder movement they settled back into a smoothness Such strength and softness gave to all his movements a distinctive grace like the grace of the panther whatever he did, as with the great cat balance set off each attitude His voice was pleasant and his utterance quick and gentle, except when malice or humour gave it a harder or more brilliant modulation His smile was prompt and genial when he smiled, his teeth flashed and his eyes snapped formidably His carriage was fine, so that he somehow seemed to be looking downwards from an eminence The things that struck you most about him were his grace, the vivid intelligence of his expression, charming and yet disquieting, his eyes watching you with flattering attention but with acute appraisal but before all was the impact of his challenging manhood

Sangram, who had seen him grow from a handsome child to the superb man before him, was never tired of looking at him and watching him there is something abstract and all-conquering in beauty He knew his brother's character very well, and would have loved him had he not been beautiful but as it was, Raemall's beauty deepened his affection and gave to it a painful poignancy For the extreme of

beauty—whether it be a scene or a stone or a song or a beast or a man—has in it something almost intolerable

So he looked at Raemall, smiling faintly, forgetful of the question

“Well, what is there for us?” prompted Raemall

Sangram saw into him as a person on a cliff sees to the bottom of a sunlit sea-pool, which to those more on a level is impenetrable to the eye, and brilliant, unfathomable

“In these latter days of the Raj, brother,” he said, his smile now touched with irony, “the greatest repute and honours may only be achieved by good rule and in high politics”

Raemall later thought this maxim over and saw that it was true. He added two reflections out of his own corrupt experience. If you once possess a definite reputation, it will almost for ever be a millstone or a royal umbrella to you. And having once achieved such repute and honours as Sangram meant, he might have them and all the rest as well.

In spite of the fact that his thoughts ran thus, it must not be concluded that he was a cynic. He was a young man half-corrupted in the springs of his character, with a very great appetite for glory, pleasure and achievement.

He set to work without loss of time.

He determined to continue the Council as it was for a year, and took the lead with unmistakable mastery. He entirely cast off his sulky non-cooperation, and the energy of his personality reformed the remaining original members, long rendered torpid and hopeless by the Maharam's policy. He got rid of her compliant nominees but did not fill their places. It became clear that he had forgotten nothing of what he had heard during his minority. He possessed memory and judgment and what now began to be revealed as a brilliant brain.

Having devoted the summer to reviewing State affairs and officers, removing the Council and his chief men and his chief courtiers to his estate in the Himalayan hills, near Simla, where he continued business throughout the hot weather, he began to lay plans for a tour of India in the cold weather. The object of this tour was described as a desire to make the acquaintance of his fellow-rulers, to discuss with them, and to observe methods and study conditions in the States and in British India. The British Government welcomed these symptoms with delight and gave every assistance in making arrangements.

This tour was a success from first to last. Raemall's great charm of personality won him the friendship of the most distrustful of his peers and the most difficult of Governors. His penetration and retentiveness were impressive, his purposeful energy woke enthusiasm. Though he had scarcely left Surhawara, he had not observed a succession of Residents and European visitors to no purpose, and he conducted himself with a modesty and simplicity that won him excellent opinions. Nor was he insincere in all this. He was genuinely excited by what

he now saw and learnt for the first time, and a certain magnificent simplicity is not alien to the Rajput

His mother posted him with various astral premonitions on his route, advising this or that but he paid no attention and disregarded the vexations. Besides, now that her son's accession relieved her of responsibility of State, Krishna Lal bowed to his authority and her advisers who had hoped to continue their empire in leading her to indulge her son, found the field of their influence and activity abruptly shrunken

Raemall went to many receptions and his avid ears caught many a remark uttered behind his back

"That's young Surthawara"

"A promising ruler, they say. A fine sportsman"

"Remarkably handsome, less gorgeous than most of them, too, better taste. Of course he's a Rajput"

But, most often of all,

"Young Surthawara splendid abilities a coming man
a great future"

In the second summer of his reign, Raemall did not diminish his princely activities, and only went up to the hills when the hot weather drove him. He overhauled the machinery of justice and civil administration in his realm, for in the nine years of Krishna Lal Maharani's regency, a remarkable number of posts had passed into the hands of the priestly caste. He was quite honestly surprised at the unobtrusive magnitude of what had been going on, and when his lords and lordlings and minorities found him accessible, a cloud of complaints and revelations besieged his ear. They also discovered, however, that he was not easy to deceive. His sharp self-honouring wits dealt mercilessly with subterfuge. He had a sarcastic tongue for the unmasked intriguer and the false representer, and he was liberal to faithful servants. He examined all major cases himself, and devoted one hour a day, when he was in residence in Surthawara, to hearing common cases from the city or countryside. He also gave one month to touring the State, holding petty courts. In these his justice was picturesque, after the manner of his country—a kind of justice deriving not from books but from his own perspicuity and mother-wit. But it was justice, and it established him in the eye and the favour of his populace.

He also returned to his father's progressive policy. This was not so much because his people liked improvements and innovations—they did not, except where facilities of water or medicament were supplied—as because he saw that a progressive policy was not only acceptable to the Raj, but the war-horse of the Indian politician. To be a reactionary was to be a hermit in politics. Even a fighting reactionary must cover himself with a shield emblazoned with progressive slogans, such as Welfare of the Peasant, Recognition of Untouchables, Sound Economics. Behind this camouflage you can advocate a return to the spinning-wheel and surrender India into the hands of her merchant

and money-lending castes, and her priests preaching the doctrine of Karma will bind her hands and her feet for you.

To be an old-fashioned tyrant would have pleased Raemall much better, but these were his times and whatever the terrain and the steed, he played to win.

The financial position of the State of Surthawara was not bad. The Maharajah Lakshman Singh had been economical to a degree unusual in a Rajput, which fact, together with his personal frailty, had accounted for his lack of popularity. His wife the Maharani Urmila had ruled with the thrifty instincts of a housekeeping woman: and as for Krishna Lal, she had been diligent in seeking pious advice and prodigal of posts, but when it came to granting land or pensions to priesthoods and temples, she had shown a certain miserliness and tended, so to speak, to draw the bill upon the future, when her son should reign. In consequence of this, the administration of the State became increasingly corrupt and money did not flow in: but on the other hand, the Treasury was not despoiled.

This state of affairs suited Raemall well. He gained a great reputation inside the State as the father of his people, and as a reformer outside. Finances were set to improve and the Treasury was well filled.

Then there were all those other things he wanted, the playthings of a potentate. Discretion prevented his indulging himself to any very extravagant degree at present. and there was also the fact that, for the first time, his brains were fully exercised. Rule was a superb toy: the multitudinous minutiae of government were inexhaustible: the manœuvring of men of position and power was fascinating. His excellent wits whetted themselves like a hunting hound that stoats for sport, he fell on the difficulties.

But when with the early evening or the end of the week his work was over, there came the vacant hours of leisure: and it was then that he had recourse to the other playthings.

Horses and sport came first in his list of toys (the longed-for army was shelved for the present): but horses and sport meant morning hours, and he only gave himself one free day a week, like the Europeans. Therefore his horses were the mounts of his morning rides and his sport was polo or pig-sticking or the pursuit of deer or the great cats once a week. Later—later—there would be races and tiger-shoots and grouse-parties and polo tournaments: but not yet.

In the evenings, when the swift dusk fell between six and seven o'clock, Raemall took his pleasure in his palace. His mother he had by now accommodated in a separate palace in the city, much smaller than the great palace but much larger than her courts in the great palace. He was therefore free to pursue his own bents, and he did so.

He had always delighted in tales of old deeds and songs and music: so now he became a patron of Pabu's brotherhood and kept a train of nautch-girls picked for their beauty and their accomplishments: as

singers and dancers The songs of Pabu and his brethren were in the heroic mould, epics or ballads : but the songs of nautches are of the people, songs of the seasons, satires, songs of the gods and their loves and the complicated art of their dancing tells those tales too . the eyes and the crook of the finger are all speech

He kept with him some favoured vassals, young men like himself, and two or three older men with offices in the palace and these bore him company in his reactions

And as by day he rushed lustily upon his work, his brain eager for problems as at the end of his week he sprang on his horses or stalked his tiger tirelessly afoot so in the evenings he drank poetry with his victuals and dealt lustily with his dancing girls

CHAPTER VIII

1921-1922

KAMADEVA'S FAVOUR

WHEN Raemall had been on the throne two and a half years, and his reputation as a ruler was already well founded, he received an invitation to attend a great event in the calendar of Rajasthan and this was the accession of the Maharajah of Chamunnar

This kingdom was the premier State of Rajputana and indeed, in a certain way, of all India It was not by any means the largest, even in Rajputana, and small by the standards of Mysore or Hyderabad but in history and tradition it far outshone any other This kingdom was a kingdom before the kingdoms of the south were formed this was the last to bow the knee to the Moguls, and never gave them a wife nor more than token fealty The dynasty whose latest representative now ascended the *Gadi* of Chamunnar had ruled this kingdom for close on twelve hundred years sometimes hiding from the incessant invaders in reed huts or in hill-top caverns, but always defiant, always returning and always lords of the realm they still rule Of all the kingdoms of Rajputana this has eminence in deeds, this is the least compromising, the least changed, and the most revered If you should form a dream of India, of colour and heat, squalor and splendour, of lakes and island palaces of marble, the work of an enchanter's wand . of strange practices and festivals and wooden ploughs, of the bullock at the creaking well-head, of temples and processions, scorched crops, copper-beaters and jewellers and toy makers, the tree of waxen blossom swooning with scent, the ancient life of villages, the fish unnetted, the pigeon sacred, the Cow divine this is Chamunnar Chamunnar is pleasure-loving, beautiful, holy, it has the quietness of the pride of the sun changeless Chamunnar is very India

To witness the accession of the new prince were invited, as guests of honour, the seven great princes ruling among the thirty-six royal

tribes of Rajputana and all came in the curious temper of rivalry and brotherhood which is wrought by the fact that all these tribes but two reckon themselves *ek bap ke betan*, the sons of one father. The thirty and four are the Solar Rajputs, sons of the Sun through Rama the hero and god these others are Chandravira, sons of Krishna, the Lunar Rajputs Rajputana—the land of the Sons of Kings and this was the premier among the sons of kings

A great camp was pitched outside the capital, the lovely huddled city of Karandol here all the visiting princes were accommodated, together with their suites Chamunnar had at last yielded to the pressure of the times and of the Raj, and had permitted the building of a railway, though for more than a generation the sacred kingdom had kept off the undesired improvement But this railway was not allowed to approach nearer than five miles to Karandol and there in the sidings stood the royal trains of the seven visiting rulers To mark the occasion, Raemall had two saloons built, painted white and picked out with gilt In other accommodation came his horses, his gentlemen-in-waiting, his stewards, kitcheners, *saises*, and his two favourite dancing-girls but these last came independently and though they travelled in style, with their mothers, and though arrangements were made for them at all junctures, they were at no point acknowledged

Raemall himself set out like a young lion lusty for life for after giving himself a week of holiday and sport, he had repaired to the armoury to keep his tryst and to the huge joy of old Sheodan Singh, the strength came to him, and he had brandished three times round his head the two-handed iron sword of the heroic Jaswant

Karandol stood on a broad lake with a verdant margin, lying between high fretted hills, much more beautiful, much more green, much more ancient, much more lovely than Meerapur Karandol was not a big city, but it was to the Rajput Hindu something of what Mecca and Jerusalem are to the Christian and to Islam It was a city of winding ways, of handsome two-storeyed houses richly moulded, painted white, with gay-coloured wall-paintings of elephants and gods it was full of temples and great trees, and the temple ghats, marble-stepped, stretched a mile along the lake sheer from the lake, at the far end of the city, rose the towering, dazzling marble walls of the great palace On the lake-edge was a fine triple gate leading to the inner city and palace to the landward was the great Tripolia, the three-arched elephant gate where the *nakkaras* rolled their drumfire, and within was the vast paved courtyard, from which reared the richly moulded bastions of the white palace, tier upon diminishing dazzling tier of lattices and corbel windows, till the seventh floor pierced the ary blue with its pillared howdah-roofed pavilions

From a court far above the city you could gaze down on the one hand upon the lake dotted with island palaces, and on the other into the great elephant-court Up here it was cooler and shady to one end was the solid wall of the palace, and round three sides ran a fine marble

screen, in the centre of each trellis-wall a pavilion whose roofs were trimmed with three golden pinnacles apiece : orange-trees grew in great jars, bearing small yellow oranges amid their glossy foliage. On the pavement was an intricate water-maze, a weaving channel two inches wide, deep a finger's thickness. It was dry : the sun beat down into the court : it was empty, empty as only a sun-scoured place can be, quite empty.

The hour was towards nine in the morning.

Out of the black doorway emerged an old woman. She went and looked down through a lattice : there were no strangers down there far below, only men of the palace, rigged out in snow-white cotton and brilliant turbans, coming and going : and in the pavilion over the middle arch of the Tripolia the musicians gossiping and plucking their instruments, in the two flanking arches the back-sides of two monstrous elephants, magnificently caparisoned in crimson and gold, their mahouts sitting on their necks. They were shackled by the foot to rings in the walls, and the shackles were gilt : they had been groomed a dull black and painted with tiger-designs in gold and scarlet and blue all round their eyes and down their trunks : but from up here all you saw was the little black tail waving from cheek to cheek of the huge black buttocks, each painted with a spade-leaf design in gold. Sometimes you saw the waving of the trunk at the other end, but the little black tails twitched slackly to and fro, to and fro between the elegantly painted buttocks.

The old woman squatted down in the shade by the entry.

Presently a girl darted out of the door. She ran to the screens and looked down : seeing nothing, she came back slowly.

She was not fifteen, dressed in the head-scarf, short bodice, and great skirt of the Rajputni, her dress was of sky-blue, her skirt of stiff silk muslin sprigged with gold, and along the hem shimmered several broad bands of pure gold-thread, and the same edged her scarf. She wore bracelets and anklets of gold, and these were trimmed with little shallow-tongued bells. Her hair was dark and lustrous and pinned with golden pins : the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet were henna'd crimson. In face and figure she was of extreme beauty : brows like bows, an olive complexion, eyes like a deer's : her fingers bent backward, very soft : she was a little under middle height, all her limbs most perfectly rounded, her wrists flowing into her hands without a bone showing and her calves tapering straightly into her ankles and these shaping smoothly into the foot : high and deep-bosomed, high-hipped, cypress-waisted : and she moved with the grace of sufficient strength and great suppleness.

She idled up to the little tank of water standing at the head of the court and dabbled her fingers in it, sighing. Then she dipped up an earthen cup of water and sauntering to the head of the maze, stood pensive a moment, squatted quickly down at the head of it, her light skirts full all round her, and with great precaution she slowly emptied the cup into the channel. The water ran weaving like a dark snake

along the maze, hissing on the hot stone. She watched it, intent and motionless. It did not reach the last channels. Before the end of the rivulet had died, the beginning was drying up in the sun.

"I never reach the end, Sitabai!" exclaimed the girl, turning to the old woman, "I am doomed to bad luck, it must be that I am doomed to bad luck."

She was half-laughing, half-vexed.

"Pour it a little quicker, mistress," said the old woman.

"Then it spills," replied the girl, but she rose and dipped up another cup and squatted to try again. "Now—so——"

"Steadily," said the old woman.

"And it spills," confirmed the girl, a long stream ran astray, filling portions of channels as it broke across the maze, and died hissing on the stone.

"Yet is it only a game and of no omen," the old woman comforted her.

At that moment there was a distant roar in the town and approaching shouts. She ran to the lattice, clapping her hands, and the bells all uttered a flat jingle.

"Fetch the ladies, Sitabai," she cried, "now they're coming, fetch the ladies, go quick, quick!"

The great *nakkaras* in the Tripolia broke into a roll of drumfire, cannon resounded. The musicians struck up with *binas*, guitars, and flutes. The elephants raised their majestic trunks and trumpeted.

The princes were coming.

Two other girls came running, and behind them, composedly, came an older woman, of great beauty, not yet forty. She went up to the girl in blue.

"How long have you been playing out here, Tara Devi?" she asked the girl.

"Perhaps half an hour, mother. I had old Sita with me," replied the daughter.

Now the shouting crowd was coming up the hill, and the first out-riders came in. The fore-part of the first prince's procession, the prince himself, an elderly man under a great tasselled umbrella, atop a huge elephant. In the shadow of the umbrella his gems flashed and glared and glittered. He passed, with his cortège, a medley of magnificent colours. The next came, with a fresh roll of drums, fresh trumpetings, another surge of shouting. The populace perched itself everywhere, along walls, in the boughs of trees, along the crest of the Tripolia, yelling and throwing flowers. Another cortège, another prince and another. The great court below became a jostle of colour, horses stamped, the elephants plodded on, noticing everything with their twinkling eyes, fanning their painted ears, their bells ringing, waving their trunks and smiling secretly, as elephants do. The courtyard of the queen Pushpavati, high above, was now full of women and equally a riot of colour and jewellery and heavy scent. From below the men could see parts of the marble trellis against the sky, but the trelliser

of India are so carved that though the women can see down and outward, those below can scarcely guess a silhouette above. Nevertheless, there was not a man of the men below but was conscious he was cutting a figure in the view of myriad unseen women aloft behind a hundred fretted screens, and they swaggered and rolled their eyes and twirled their moustaches.

Even as the prince of greatest consequence had gone first, so now the junior came last and this was Surthawara.

Raemall, planning his cavalcade with his bards and his historian and his nobles, had conceived it in the terms of Rajput chivalry. Here came no elephant, but a cavalcade of superb horses and gentlemen walking afoot, dressed in the older style of Rajasthan, coats of pleated flowered muslin with flying skirts, close leggings, silken sashes and coloured turbans and shoes of Persian shape.

Raemall himself, flashing with jewels, rode a young and fiery stallion that gave him room to display his magnificent horsemanship. The beast was black, sleek and brilliantly caparisoned. On one side was led his favourite coursing hound, a great yellow animal in a golden collar. On the other was carried his favourite falcon. Behind him, mounted on a painted pole, followed the royal umbrella and also a circular fan of peacock's feathers. And after this came the cavalcade.

Surthawara breasted the slope before the Tripolia, the kettledrums rolled, the musicians played, the elephants trumpeted, there was a tide of hand-clapping, and the crowd yelled itself hoarse, for all saw that this was the old days come alive again, the horses! the horses! they yelled, and indeed they were picked horses.

This last cortège came through the gate, and Raemall instantly was aware of the argus-eyed lattices. Up there, steeply above, were the women, the greatest princesses of Rajasthan, the famed queens and princesses of Chamunnar. He pricked up his horse as he came through the shadow of the gate. The stallion curvetted and reared and was quelled and gentled, he was pricked into a capriole, and made to caracole to the left, to the right. The crowd shouted and threw flowers from the ridge of the gateways. Surthawara, coming on, eyed the marble trellis of the court against the sky and twirled his moustaches and laid his hand on the jewelled hilt of his sword with all the bravado of one that had brandished the iron sword of Jaswant. From high up, through all the din, came a sound like the tongues of little bells. Or was it nothing? Surthawara rode on, gallant and swaggering.

The bells had indeed given tongue. For Tara Devi watched Surthawara come through the gate with a breathless stillness, and when he brought his horse to order and twirled his moustaches eyeing the trellis far above, he was staring straight at her. And she had laughed aloud and clapped her hands and stamped her feet.

"Who is that, mother?" she cried. "Who is that, O my mother? He is as glorious as Rama, he is a god, he is a god——" but when Pushpavati looked for her, she was gone.

Sitabai brought Tara Devi to her mother before the next stage of

affairs began, her father's ascent of the Gadi of Chamunnar in the Great Hall

"Leave us," said Pushpavati to the waiting woman, and turning to Tara Devi, went on, "Daughter, where have you been?"

Tara Devi cast her eyes down and coloured. Upon being pressed, she said, "I went along the Wind Gallery."

"To follow that young man Surthawara?"

"Yes."

"Before everyone you went from window to window to see him?"

"Yes, O Pushpavati, my mother. So did many."

"It is not well."

"No, mother."

"It is folly, and very unseemly. I have not known you behave so before, child. I think you shall not come to watch your father ascend the *gadi*."

Tara Devi glanced up mutinous, and then tears hung in her eyes. Pushpavati noted the one and the other.

"Unless and only if you sit by me all the time," she amended. "And for the purpose of watching your father and not young Surthawara. Understand that for you a greater marriage is being found than one of the youngest and smallest of the kingdoms. The days of the bards' old tales are done, my dear."

Tara Devi at the approach of fifteen was not betrothed. In the matters of betrothal and marriage-age, as in many other things, the ancient house of Chamunnar preserved Hindu customs as they were before they suffered deformity to ward off the demands of the Moguls. Besides, there was no lack of suitors for the honour of the hand of a Chamunnar princess.

Tara Devi laid her henna-dyed fingers and her palms together in the gesture of submission and supplication. She cast her eyes down again, meek and very lovely.

Pushpavati lost little time in taking action. But Tara Devi lost less. She set Sita to gather all talk of Surthawara from bards, servants, and the bazaars. And being delighted by what she heard, she made Sita filch from her father's possession a miniature of herself, very finely executed in the Indian manner. And lastly she made Sita arrange for this miniature to come to Surthawara's hands. It was to go unnamed.

Pushpavati had to wait till the affair of the accession had run its course. But the portrait of her daughter reached its recipient in less than two days' time.

"Well?" demanded Tara Devi, meeting Sita by secret arrangement in the great heat of the day, in the empty court of the water-maze. "He had it last night? How did he look? What did he do?"

"Ram, Ram have mercy," replied the old woman, clutching her amulet, "my heart fails me, mistress, what you do is not good."

"Never mind," replied Tara Devi, clasping her crimson palms

together, her eyes dancing with anticipation, "tell me, tell me, Sitabai, how he looked? What he did?"

"Ram have mercy," replied Sitabai, "the man I know of says, that he would have no company that night, he sent everyone away in the morning he was like a man afire, he will know who it is, he has gone riding off on the black horse. He is wild, mistress, he is wild"

"He does not know who it is?"

"No"

"You may have him informed"

"Consider, mistress! for your father's sake, and your mother's——"

Tara Devi waved her small hand and laughed softly her teeth were like pomegranate seeds

"He is a man of the future, even if the State is small and am I not the youngest daughter, least in consideration? His clan may seek wives of us, we of them, they are no longer kin, the genealogist told it you what does a woman want in her husband? Go to, Sitabai!—Did you get back my picture? give it me"

"He wears it He would not give it back"

"Wah, wah! So!" She laughed again and clapped her hands noiselessly together Sita watched her appalled and fascinated "Now let me think," said Tara Devi to herself "Let him know my name, and tell him to await the coming of the coconut I must have a portrait of him I will have no other man, since he is willing——"

"Mistress, the stars——"

"O, the stars, the stars! What reck did Draupadi's Arjuna or the princess of Kanauj take of the stars? Soon we shall be so modern, that the old times will be with us again The priests can afterwards reconcile the stars, if they must I am not my father's youngest and his darling for nothing—Tell him who I am, Sitabai bring me a portrait of him I will have care to my father, and to my mother too what he and I both wish cannot be prevented it will come about" Tara Devi laughed like the sun on the rippling lake of Karandola "It will come about," she repeated, "*shri* Ram and Kamadeva will befriend us, Sitabai"

In something under a year, when the moon was beaming over Ranthambor's crown of *kunguras*, and the bulging bases of the crenellated battlements were lost in gulfs of blue shadow, there were the lights and noise of a marriage inside the fort Kamadeva, the god of love, had answered the prayers of the lovers in spite of all, the ruler of Chamunnar was prevailed upon, and the coconut had come to Surthawara, in the name of the youngest daughter of Chamunnar the jewelled emblem was accepted

The ceremony was being performed towards sundown The long and gorgeous marriage procession had begun at the hour appointed by the astrologers, who, having been flouted over the main issue, were religiously consulted on all other matters Now, at the approach of the most auspicious moment, the rites approached their culmination

There were present members and priests of the houses of Chamunnar and of Surthawara, and the chief of the vassals of Surthawara and the chieftain of the senior tribe of the Surthawara Mers, the wild autochthonous hillsmen of the realm, who stood outside the feudal race of Rajputs and were not caste tribes nevertheless, no royal marriage could be celebrated except in the presence of their chieftain. These two had always to witness the marriage of their lord, and the marriage must always take place in the half-deserted and jealous fort of Ranthambor.

Yet, in spite of all the expression of riot and joy which goes to an Indian wedding, when the long procession has paraded the streets with music and every guest has his gift and there is much din and clan-feasting, there was something amiss at this marriage. For the astrologers had compared the horoscopes of the pair, and they had conferred with the household priests of Chamunnar and Surthawara, and they had talked of it with the bards and the bards with others. At the back of the gathering of the inner ones, by a door, stood Pabu the bard and Madho Budh the court astronomer, who also read the fate of the stars. They stood watching the proceedings, and nearby stood their fellows from Chamunnar.

The bride and groom, dressed in red spangled with gold, sat upon a platform separated by a curtain held up between them, till its dropping for the final ceremonies now were performed the *hathlevi*, the *ganth-jora*, and the *satphera* that is to say, Raemall and Tara-Devi, even now scarcely able to see one another for the fringes and veils and chaplets and wreaths of flowers, had their hands joined together, their garments knotted together, and together took the seven steps round the sacred fire.

Madho Budh the astrologer turned to Pabu in the doorway.

"It is done," he said, "it is done. Fate is defied. The marriage is ill-starred, Pabujī. My heart is afraid."

"There is no security with the tiger," replied the chief bard, and his word became a saying. "There is no security with the tiger," they say in Surthawara.

Now, when the pair had taken the seven steps, hand-fasted and bound together, they were led by the chief vassal and the chieftain, according to ancient custom, into the inner part of the grim castle where Raemall had been born, and in the appointed part of the penitential, they were abandoned to one another.

Here, with a hand that was reckless with eagerness, Raemall put aside the veil and fringe and flowers of the girl, and found her more beautiful than anything he had known. Her youth and perfection and race abashed him. But in him she found something rougher and fiercer than she had imagined in the nature of Kamadeva, the god of the flowery bow.

CHAPTER IX

1923

SANGRAM RETURNS

SURTHAWARA now entered upon a seven years' period of rule and politics. At the first he fell upon the regulation of his realm with his early vigour, but having appointed able officers whom he paid well, much of the former tangle of difficulties was straightened out, and though he kept power concentrated in his hands, the character of his work was less amusing to him. When he had specious rascals to discover and set aside and injustices to redeem in his durbars, there was room for malice and kudos, but a more or less virtuous and economical state of affairs is tame to the unphilosophic temperament and insipid to a taste dulled by grandeur.

However, he did his work, and he did it well. If trouble arose, he recaptured his erstwhile enthusiasm, he gave himself more to sport, his present ambition being the training of a crack polo-team, and above all, he had his new Maharani.

His passionate affection for her, and hers for him, continued as it had promised. The nautch-girls departed, some given to his vassals, some restored, with dowers, to their life in the city. The Indian woman of the song and dance, if her talents and beauty permit, lives very much the life of the Greek *hetaira*, and the married men seek in her what they cannot find at home. But Raemall no longer wanted such women, except in a band for some show or feast, to pleasure guests. In Tara Devi he recognised a precious thing. Tara Devi was so young, so lovely, so finished in her manners, so full of impudence and waywardness, so high-spirited and joyous, and yet she had in her such stiff pride of race, that no woman of the people, however sophisticated and accomplished, could stand the comparison. Her talk was quick and pointed, she proved physically bold, and took aptly first to the gun and soon to the rifle, going up into the hills and shooting from elephant-back. Raemall delighted in training her. He had an English riding-habit made for her, and a school built for her, teaching her in private, himself, and found she had aptitude for horsemanship too. In this he was perhaps exorcising the fading ghosts of Mrs de Travers and Barbara Gould. Remembering, like a spell from his boyhood, the singing of Sitala Maharani, he had her taught to sing, but she never came to sing more than little bits of songs, inconsequently, like a bird. Nevertheless, her verses and snatches suited her quick and joyous nature.

In the winter of that year Sangram came back from his military training in England. He had heard (but not from his brother) of the great beauty of Tara Devi, and of the romantic and difficult business of the match.

Raemall had missed his brother but not badly. He felt freer when Sangram was away, for if he had saved his life, he had also partly blinded him, and the character of Sangram was like a criticism of his

own character As the most suitable setting for the scene of their reunion, Raemall chose his new toy, the billiard-room It was both private and impressive But when Sangram again walked into his presence, he felt his heart turn over, and so far from waiting in a dignified attitude at the head of the long saloon, he rose and hastened to meet him with outstretched hands

"You're taller, Sanga," he exclaimed in English, "so much burlier! Well, and how are you? You won't tire in the next Aheria, I can see that, eh! How's your polo?"

"Goodish," replied Sangram

"Good enough for the Surthawara team? Then you must play in my team You could captain it for me when I'm on business at Delhi—this Chamber of Princes, one must appear at some of the sessions"

He plied Sangram with questions about England, France, Austria, winter-sports, the sea, the great ships Sangram answered willingly, and presently silence came on them and they sat looking at each other

"Well," said Raemall at last, "you went away a youth, and you come back a man It is curious Have you changed? Are you the same? Have I changed?"

"How can I tell?" replied Sangram, smiling and as he looked at Raemall, the smile deepened in his eyes, for his brother's beauty was like the sun at noon

They walked about the courts, talking of many things, Raemall showing him what was altered, what new, and came round to the billiard-room again

"What do you think of the tigers?" asked Raemall There were eleven tiger-skins mounted slantwise on the walls, which were full of trophies except the wall at the head of the room, which bore three heads of different deer and one tiger only

"They are very fine," replied Sangram, "all to your rifle?"

"Nearly all There are others these are selected Which is the best?"

Sangram considered them critically and picked out the best and the second best

"No," replied Raemall, "that is the best," and he pointed to the skin at the head of the room It was manifestly not the best it was smaller than several, and not a prime skin Sangram looked at his brother enquiringly

"That is the best," replied Raemall, "that is hers It was her first The other heads are hers too, all firsts of their kind"

"Your—your house?" asked Sangram, not caring to name his brother's wife before he himself named her In India a man's wife is a subject of silence except to intimates

"Hers," replied Raemall "Come, you shall meet her She is expecting us I have built a special pavilion for her on the top roof"

The pavilion was high, high above all the palace roofs, a small airy court covered at one end and with scalloped windows all round,

so that it had not so much windows as a colonnade set against the blue. It was all of white glossy plaster between every window was an Apsara, winged and full-skirted, executed in a fine mosaic of grey-blue mirror-glass. Above the windows ran frond-like designs in the twinkling glass, and below them the mirrors, the size of half-pennies, all convex, formed heavy patterned panels. The roof at the end was beautifully groined, decorated only by its own pearl-grey shadows.

On cushions under the pavilion sat Tara Devi. Being warned of her husband's coming, she had sent her women away. She had chosen ornaments of silver and pearls, and her diaphanous costume, bordered with silver, was of a very faint rose-pink that set off her honey-gold skin. In every little grey-blue mirror was therefore a focus of rose.

Raemall appeared first at the head of the stair.

"Maharani Sahiba," he said, "thou receivest my brother Sangram."

Sangram came up, and for a moment Tara Devi sat there. He saw her against the pure white wall and the mirrors, still and perfect, the parting in her hair crimson, the pearls in her ears, the red lips and golden skin, the golden henna'd hand idle across a long lute lying in the billows of her muslin skirts. Tara Devi was more like a picture, a poem, a dream, than a reality. The memory of his mother Sitala swam before him, as she used to lie on her roof in those evenings at Pratagarh.

Then Tara Devi rose, and her rising was like the flowing of a fountain. Not smiling, yet not unsmiling, she made her salutations.

Sangram had only seen one other thing as beautiful as Tara Devi, and that was his half-brother Raemall. He turned quickly to look at him, and found himself observed with smiling satisfaction. Raemall was satisfied that his brother was struck silent at the beauty of his wife, satisfied that his brother so evidently paired them in beauty. Sangram was the first man, outside her father's household, who had seen Tara Devi. Raemall was satisfied.

Sangram's first ride took him up to the shrine of Ganesha in the banyan-grove, where he found Raghudeva Rao engaged in meditation. Nothing was changed. It was as if three years had gone in a night.

Sangram sat and waited.

Presently the mild ascetic stirred, as if a task were done, and sight came back to his eyes. He smiled.

"Thou art returned, Maharaj."

"I am returned, holy one."

"What hast thou learnt?"

"I have been to a school for soldiers. Is not my place yet here?"

Raghudeva Rao considered him calmly.

"Thy place is not here, yet for a while it may be so."

"When, holy one?"

"Later, later. When the new year is two or three months gone, then mayest thou come here for a while."

Raemall's tour had taken place in the cold weather of 1919. It had been arranged chiefly with a view to his making, in his right as his father's son, the acquaintance of the greater among his fellow-rulers and of the leading men, Indian and English, in the major provinces of British India. He had made the tour after a three years' period of sullen inaction and inattention and secret dreaming; nevertheless, he had during that period observed more than a little, and on his tour, though he was chiefly interested in savouring the outer world to the full and making an impression (which he had the wit to make by tact and understanding as much as by brilliance)—he had formed a very shrewd idea of what was going on.

Now that his brother was back from his military schooling in Europe, Raemall was interested to discover how he saw things. He still envied Sangram his knowledge of Europe, but more than the pleasure of indulging his envy, he wanted Sangram's view.

"Tell me about the revolutions," he said, in English, half carelessly, half imperiously, "all this communism and revolt, will it touch us? And if it does, to what effect?"

"How should I know?" replied Sangram, reacting instantly against his brother's tone. Raemall, his mind set merely on the information he wanted, had spoken as if he were speaking to one of his lesser *thakurs*. All his life Sangram had been beyond the reach of the elder prince's patronage or dictation. Moreover, he was a reflective man, and his reflectiveness was mitigated or hampered by two things, both arising from a native modesty: he was diffident in expression, always a learner rather than a talker; and he was humorous. He would express himself freely if left to erupt into an argument, or if something seen or heard set him off spontaneously; but the pointed finger, the direct invitation to perform, he always refused.

Raemall had forgotten this. He must school himself if he was to secure his wish: throughout their days, he had never got from Sangram a thing he had not a mind to give, nor did Sangram ever refuse what was asked of his affection. Raemall had lost touch with the discipline of this not intractable will, and of this generosity, remembering only the judgment he wished to exploit. He reined himself back.

"I need your wisdom," he said, smiling, continuing in the English both spoke so perfectly, and which, rather than Hindi, seemed natural to many occasions, yet not so natural as not to afford a certain pleasure of achievement. "Sooner or later I shall enter the field of politics, as you advised me three years ago—do you remember?—and I know of no one who sees things as clearly as you do. All the men I have met see from their own narrow angle; but you seem to see from a height."

Sangram's only reply to this was a half-laugh accompanied by a twinkling and considering glance. He was undeceived: it was therefore his brother who stood at a disadvantage. Raemall also had lost touch with his incorruptible integrity of mind: when he flattered, he

was accustomed to fit his flattery to the bias or aspiration of his victim, and his adroitness passed for sympathy · but Sangram was laughing at him He frowned in a moment's baffled irritation He walked off to a window He looked back at his brother out of the corners of his eyes, like a touchy horse then again and he saw that there was no scorn in his brother, only kindness and mockery without malice It was not ever easy to look at Sangram and preserve feeling against him He abandoned art and ill-humour and envy together, and coming back, asked in a totally different voice, "Tell me, Sanga, is this communism going to take in India? Nehru's making a study of the Moscow model"

"I don't see how we can have a communist revolution unless we abolish caste," replied Sangram, quickly responsive, "and to abolish caste is to abolish the doctrines of reincarnation and of Karma Community we have already in caste, but communism—or socialism—of our whole society strikes me as incompatible with caste"

"Then what do you reckon Nehru is at?"

"He is studying wordly methods of extirpating the British, while Gandhi studies spiritual ones"

"What does Congress look like to you, Sangram?"

Sangram thought

"Congress looks like two to me," he said at length "There is a very small Congress that might make political and even religious reforms it might tackle landlords and money-lenders and child-marriage and the status of low-castes and out-castes · it might in fact carry through a programme But there is a very great Congress that simply follows Gandhi Even Nehru who can see the other things cannot resist Gandhi A religious fascinates"

"And how do you read the holy man?"

Sangram laughed slightly

"He wants to be thought an Orthodox in order to appeal to the masses—who know little about him beyond that he is a great mahatma He is for things as they are, minus the British who interfered with things as they were He is a mediævalist He has no plan I do not believe in his or their well-timed and better-advertised gestures to the low castes Nor, I think, do Ambedkar or the other low-caste leaders and writers That is all to make the Christian world think him and Congress religious reformers But he is not a religious reformer, he is for child-marriage and all the rest of it he is not a revolutionary, he is for a return to the economics of the spinning-wheel he appeals to the charity of our logical but cruel religion · he is no orthodox, yet under the mask of orthodoxy he wins his recognition among the masses as a saint But I cannot help observing that the Saint of Congress spends the powers of his sainthood preaching and attempting the assumption of political power, without himself or his followers giving evidence of political responsibility He does not think clearly enough to be a cynic but one must of course bear in mind that if he exploded

his own religion, he would lose the title and occupation of Saint "

Raemall laughed

"And he is a blackmailer," he said, "these fasts are only spiritual blackmail you overlooked that But, Sanga, you are a heretic We Rajputs are all inclined to heresy, since we resent and sometimes deny Brahmans being the Lords but caste preserves us in our station, whether it is top or top but one Enlightened self-interest—as they call it—if nothing else—demands that we should approve the system, but I think I detect sympathy with the afflicted in your words "

"Certainly," replied Sangram ironically "I am very Mahatma-like myself Even high caste is no title to rest content Infinite charity, infinite effort One can only rest content when one has achieved God "

"Which is Nirvana," said Raemall, half inwardly Then he laughed, as a dog shakes himself on land after a momentary plunge into a deep river "How profoundly you philosophise!" he exclaimed, mocking but affectionate, "what wisdom that old banyan-tree must have heard Is it the air inspired by Raghudeva Rao that makes you so perspicacious, or is it India seen in perspective from Europe? I will go to Europe myself, that is a laudable reason for my going to Europe A far from frivolous reason "

Sangram rose and walked up and down the room, reviewing, clearing, and condensing his thoughts Raemall watched him with interest, neither prompting nor eliciting for he was recalling the ways of his brother Just as Sangram could always give himself up to the pleasure of looking at his brother's beauty, so Raemall had always taken pleasure in watching Sangram consider before speech Generally he put away the upshot of his reflections unuttered But it was like watching a living process

"The English," observed Sangram at length, stopping to sit on the edge of a table, and lighting a cigarette, "are a very curious people Very curious, the natives are Now I noticed in England that the generality take no interest whatever in India, although they rule us We're a dead letter to them The exceptions are those retired from India and their intelligentsia Their intelligentsia suspect that their accursed brothers the soldiers, the bureaucrats, and the merchants are ruining India They therefore lend an ear and the voice they hear is the voice of our intelligentsia The mass is inarticulate, as Congress truly says there is only the word of Congress for it, that they represent this mass but intelligentsia calls to intelligentsia. Let everything be surrendered to the vocal ones, is the cry of liberal England They wish to surrender India to her own merchants, her own bureaucrats, her own soldiers that is to say, to caste-capitalism, to corruption and nepotism. and Raemall to us" A smile very slowly illuminated Sangram's features, he dropped his voice, and his seeing eye sparkled like a well full of stars "To us,"

he repeated, "to us and our brethren of the sword, to the Mahrattas, the Punjabis, the Sikhs, the Pathans, the Baluchis, the Afghans Oho! oho!"

Raemall began to laugh too for the spectacle of a flock of highly intelligent monkeys asking a band of other highly intelligent monkeys to help put them in a position to be devoured by ten hungry wolves with eyes like saucers, was funny

Sangram took a turn up the room and down again

"Of course," he said, "I resented their indifference Why should the Parliament of forty millions rule a continent of four hundred millions? They are ignorant of us, they do not care about us They invest money in our railways and barrages and cotton-fields and tea-gardens That is not so very bad for if they spend the profits out of India, two and a half thousand million pounds invested in us should at least prevent rash abdication in favour of our irresponsibles But still, why should forty million workmen and council school teachers rule four hundred millions of us? Especially when they know and care nothing of us and only their intelligentsia attend to us at all, God help us! What have they done to our matchless handicrafts? We have precious ores in great quantity, undeveloped no heavy industries worth mentioning, not a bad thing in the long run, of course, for when those develop, the owners will be Indians They write us off as four hundred million agriculturists, while they admit that much of our soil is barren, though other parts raise four crops a year Still, I suppose we must admit that Hindu religious prejudices do prevent scientific advance—Well, well, since there is no voice except the reedy roar of a few old Imperialists and the quacking chorus of the sentimental intelligentsia, I suppose the British will step down The true education of India will begin then, when we can no longer blame every mishap on the damned British But the mortar will be withdrawn from our wall, the oil from our engines our merchants will develop our own heavy industries, and India will go under the yoke of such a capitalism as the British intelligentsia has not imagined And four generations hence—five generations hence—there will be real revolution in India the revolution of the worms against capitalism and caste Then the British will be free to play their age-old part of sympathising with the downtrodden while thinking their revolutionary manners very bad France, Greece, Italy, Russia, Spain, over again At the moment they are awkwardly placed for this, being themselves the rulers"

Sangram walked off and came back

"And again," he said, "I bear them no gratitude for emphasising and protecting our religious differences that was Montagu's gift to us, he was one of the intelligent and our intelligentsia seized on it, and now we have the spectre of the Mogul empire resuscitated in the heart of every Moslem Half the Moslems are men of Rajput or Jat race, no different from us, except that they have reduced their gods to one and have done with caste once we used to go to one

another's festivals and you got twenty holidays to the calendar instead of ten, and here in our States it still is so"

"You have made yourself clear about the British at home," said Raemall, "but what of the future of the British in India? We have our treaties, with us it is a question of honour, that is settled but what of the rest? The British have made promises ever since they conquered and annexed—promises of ultimate freedom, should India ever become responsible"

Sangram stroked his moustaches and arrayed his notions

"I see it like this," he said "There are more lands in India than in Europe and as you say, we of the States have our own treaties, it is a question of honour and fidelity, that is settled they have their means to coerce the worst rulers among us Well, I consider that the British have as much right to hold India as any other conquering people, though their own unpractical sentimentalists do not think so The Brahmans were once invaders and conquerors they are a white race The ancient Rajputs were invaders and conquerors we are a white race So are the Jats The first Moslems were invaders and conquerors some were Semites and all were white. The Moguls were invaders and conquerors they were Turks and Tartars The English were traders and conquerors they are the same race with us the Rajputs and the Jats It is true that they do not settle and die here but they have as much right here as any race that has conquered in India, and we all have conquered, in our time —But they must either rule, or get out Not muddle and pander Either rule, or get out, and leave it to us to pit our energy against the wits of the Brahmans and the ruthless cunning of the merchants The Brahmans will intrigue, philosophise, teach, withhold knowledge, live on others' credulity like all priests the world over except where they must farm and serve or die The merchant and money-lender will secure his pile and insert his family in office We and the Mahrattas and the hillsmen and the tribesmen will quarrel and raven again We are not much nearer responsibility than we were a hundred years ago shall we learn in a hundred years what the Anglo-Saxons have evolved in a thousand, secure beyond the sea, with a favourable climate and a simpler religion? Has Europe itself learned responsibility, living at the gates of the teacher? But they cannot do our growing up for us either they must rule, or get out Only—only——"

Sangram broke off

"Well, Sangam? only what?" prompted Raemall, with unusual gentleness, for he perceived that his brother was speaking his heart

"Only," said Sangram, in a curious voice, "one does not want them to go Not even Nehru would want them to go all at once With all their neglect they have given more than any other conquerors Something better is possible than the welter of war and politics and capitalists and priests They are our mortar, they are our steel girders, they are the oil in our fellicies, and it is a long road If only they would not take us as an appanage to their island—but set us up to be developed

and run independently—that would preserve the honour of their promises—it is time now for that much . and give us their men and women to ensure our development and our services. Always the Government of India is overridden by the Secretary of State in England It is time we ourselves set a good pace We have let the politicians caricature India to the world too long We have given the world a legend of barbaric luxury , but they have described to the world a continent populated with worms and supernatural metaphysicians We are not so very peculiar only the muddle of our ways is remarkable, and it's a hot country Those in England have wild-cat sentimentalities and rigid shibboleths and no experience of our lands Those living with us seem to adopt us and love us and are secretly proud of us, and their hands are tied by ignorance and idealisms three thousand miles away Cut us off from England, develop us for our own ends, set up a viceroy from Indian services but give us our Englishmen ”

There was a long silence, which Sangram broke with a final observation He lit another cigarette, and spoke something like a lover who declares himself at last

“ If only we can have time enough,” he said, “ to fix the vision well in our eye, Rajasthan may yet transcend the creeds and gather into one the people of the north and west, all her own people though in many folds and under many petty tyrannies The task is ours We are within the Hindu pale, yet we dispense with the worst deformities moreover, we are bone of the bone of Indian Islam outside the pale In us is sufficient intelligence we also have energy and character There will come of us public servants and statesmen who will never come of the tribe of subtle and successful examinees, the lawyer sons of priests and traders parasites and middlemen The task is ours if we can but find honesty and find one another, the future of India is in our hands, a future to be held in honour among the races of mankind ”

Raemall felt the impact of his brother's faith he was moved he too saw this thing it struck so deeply in him as to be intolerable He got to his feet

“ Well, well,” he said, “ I expect that after all the British intelligentsia will succeed in surrendering India to the Indian intelligentsia, and then it will be each for himself and devil take the hindmost Well, we shall get the sort of chance we are used to Who will the devil be? The Russian? the Japanese? If the Russian or the Japanese attack, may I live to see the day! Aha! Then we should have a purpose again, Sanga no more crossing wits with politicians! The Rajputs rule from Kashmir and Nepal to Mysore Rajputana will call her sons to arms then the politicians, the Brahmans and the tradesmen will be set aside like a parcel of sheep, and devoured when we are hungry There are but two realties among men, the sword and the plough, the warrior and the man of the soil my blood, your sweat, that was our pact in Rajasthan Your sweat, my blood! ”

Raemall, like the war-horse snuffing battle from afar, fired up with sudden enthusiasm, proud, disdainful, and visionary, magnificent in the heat of his manhood and now it was Sangram who first smiled and then laughed in pleasure, yet there was a twinge in that pleasure

"Come, come, you old woman," Raemall rallied him, "you're not half the philosopher you make out you're as hot and wild as any of us after game I know where you'll be when the next wars come you can sit under a banyan-tree till the sun goes round the earth, and you will still be as much of a Rajput as I am"

Sangram laughed again, gently, at his brother's bravado and it was a keen delight to be complimented in such a strain

"Well, what is it?" broke in Raemall, perceiving something not said, "what are you thinking? What is it now, eh? What are you thinking now?"

He so clearly intended to discover what Sangram was thinking, that Sangram made short work of it, and said, "I was thinking that the simplicities of battle are soon over but the struggle is not, and if we are Rajputs, we are called as much to this as to those"

Raemall stared at him, his mood of elation subsiding

"You are beyond me," he said, and added, "I suppose you are right"

He turned away

Raemall and Tara Devi had married in the marriage-season, early in the year it was in the following spring that they found themselves, on the occasion of a private tiger-hunt, in a high valley in the land of the Mers The valley contained two or three hamlets, of which the largest was named Jalankar

Sangram was of the expedition Tara Devi took pleasure in him, and he had conceived for her much affection, and always her beauty was like a ravishment or an ecstasy He loved her as one loves the blue flash of the kingfisher or the scent of the rose it is a ravishing of the soul

Tara Devi was charmed by the place it lacked verdure, but the hill-tops that soared on either side and closed the head of the valley were of fantastic and beautiful shapes, and moreover many of them consisted of masses of rose-quartz At this season the torrent was still flowing, and its bed of boulders was marked by thick growths of the wild pink oleander, and the air was full of that cool sweet smell

"What a lovely place this could be!" she exclaimed, waving her delicate hand at the landscape, "what a lovely place, my lord, if there were a *bund* and a lake and a palace on the edge of the lake A lake fringed with bamboo and oleander, and that hump an island with a pavilion and garden on it, such as we had on Karandola a lake full of cranes and duck and blue kingfishers and the otter swimming!"

Raemall looked at her, enchanted he saw the fairy-tale vision too,

and in the palace he saw her, like a jewel in a casket and then again he saw her abroad on those hills like the Artemis of another land's pantheon

So it came about that he recruited engineers and architects and masons and craftsmen and quarrymen and the wild Mers of Jalankar and its hamlets watched the surveyors inspect the site with curiosity, with hostility, and with dim foreboding

Nor were the Mers the only ones who felt foreboding For Sangram's heart misgave him He saw very clearly what he had always known in his brother, and Raemall, whose vanity made him almost clairvoyant, in certain ways, saw that Sangram was finding him amiss He was driven to find out why He guessed This way and that, over several days, he tried to provoke confirmation but Sangram eluded his provocations, and Raemall's irritation mounted sharply

After dinner one evening he began to harry and bait his brother, the final act of the many sly previous efforts

"I can see you've been taking counsel with your banyan-guru again," he mocked Sangram, in English "What a Rajput, to go sitting at the feet of a quack ascetic We are not a race of *rishis* You're out of all countenance with the petty life of a court, eh? all fancy and pleasure We disapprove It is not the lofty life We have a mind for higher things Come, Sanga," he said, suddenly abandoning sarcasm, "what is it? What is wrong? Ever since we shikared at Jalankar—at Jalankar"

Sangram made no reply He did not wish to quarrel He kept his eyes down

"Sanga," said Raemall

At that tone, he glanced up It always came sooner or later, generally later, that tone it was the good fraction in Raemall finding voice

"It is this," he replied, without pretension "Your palace at Jalankar is a wickedness It will cost the State crores It will dispossess the villagers To fill the lake will rob the lower valley of three years of water there will be famine in those fields for three years It is a plaything And she is a plaything"

Sangram had not meant to say the last Raemall would have turned the rest off with a jest, but the last incensed him All the irritation of the past few days, when he divined a criticism deliberately unexpressed, rushed back on him The nearer he came to seeing certain truths the more he was prone to give way to blinding gusts of anger

"Ha!" he cried, "so that's where it lies! It is not you but I that am blind Who but a fool would trust you fool that I am, that have trusted you If my honour is intact, it is surely not thanks to you Go! Leave my roof! Go to your guru, or go to the bride who grows old waiting for you Out of my sight! My doors are shut against you I banish you from me Begone!"

Sangram himself was so angered, that he took his dismissal without protest

The new year was now two or three months old, when Sangram went up the mountain to Raghudeva Rao, who tended the shrine of Ganesha in the banyan-grove. Now he did in fact what his religion had reduced to a formality in the boyhood ceremony of the Sacred Thread and the taking of the staff and beggar's bowl. He went into the forest to learn and to think. Here were quiet space and peace to ease him of anger and hurt.

Raemall told Tara Devi, in answer to her questions, that Sangram had always wanted to take to a life of meditation, that he had tried to dissuade him, and that they had quarrelled. He then refused to speak any more of it. He drove down the mischief in him, he packed down the memory of that scene, he smoothed over the place in his mind, he effaced it. He returned with vigour to his toys.

Nevertheless, even such royal toys as the indulging of a princess of Chamunnar, the building of a lake and palace, the training of a great polo-team, the rule of a kingdom reduced to order, could not satisfy the ambitions of Surthawara. He desired a greater part, a greater stage, a greater audience. Awakening from the spell of beneficent tyranny and the first draught of true love, his mind went back to the experiences of his coming-of-age tour, and he began to look abroad with the eye of an eagle scanning fresh plains.

When he went to Delhi that autumn, to attend the session of the Chamber of Princes, which had been set up two years previously, in 1921, he went in a more thoughtful mood than formerly. His attendances in the two previous years had been different. Then he had gone because, this new House having been set up, one must evidently be seen in one's allotted seat, since one was not of the hundred and twenty-seven little lords who share twelve spokesmen, but high among the hundred and eight who sit in their own right. One must be seen among the greater ones, one must say enough to be noticeable, one must, in fact, reap one's due, from the salute of seventeen guns that roared abroad the news of one's entry at Delhi, to the praise of one's peers and of the European bureaucrats.

This time, unable to disregard the violent disorders of certain parts of British India, he attended the session less in a spirit of idle vanity. In vanity he still went, like most of the others, but it was a graver vanity. For if the Raj broke up or withdrew, how stood the Princes? What of the Mahrattas, the fierce despoilers of the Deccan, so recently the enemies of the Rajputs? There were ninety million Moslems, dangerous friends, dangerous enemies, recent imperial tyrants, perhaps fifty million Hindus of fighting race, all divided against one another. And two hundred and fifty-odd millions, priests, traders, depressed castes, and outcastes, who would go down like grass and insects under the invading foot of the Russian or Japan.

Thus Surthawara saw it, and thus other rulers had begun to see it too. There had been a recent bleeding of these men, but for two or three generations now they had been kept at peace, their turbulent armies reduced to a household guard. Under this new menace, how stood their right to the pride of absolute rule?

Now that the realm was in order and his marriage not new, Surthawara looked abroad again, and he heard the knocking at the gate.

The Chamber of Princes does not meet to discuss the internal arrangements of the States, but to concert upon general matters. The questions alluded to above were not yet matters of formal debate, but of private conversation. Surthawara in the sessions of the House proved himself a man of eloquence and brilliance. Beginning to see where his future lay, he set the foundations of that career with three fine speeches, expressing sentiments acceptable to the Raj, treating the politicians of British India with satire, and rounding off with a general call to hope, magnanimity, and faithful effort, in none of which he was insincere. This coming as it did on top of his known work as a ruler, people in both Indian and British ruling circles ceased remarking on his wonderful promise and instead began to watch him with serious attention. Mr Macartney, who was now on the last lap of his career with a post high in the Secretariat and a knighthood in prospect, introduced him among Delhi society, where he was a great success. While his marriage and his achievement in the House assured him the admiring acceptance of the greater Princes, Chamunnar himself had made no more than a formal appearance, taking no part. The scramble of politics was still repugnant to him.

Finally, in the new year, the great polo events were played, and Surthawara tried out his team against the famous Sikh teams and the no less famous regimental and private teams of the English. His team did not carry off the honours, nor did he yet expect it to do so, but it came very high in the finals.

So he retired from that season, well content. He was marked.

But Sangram had gone back to Europe, to the famous cavalry schools of Saumur, where the quality of his lineage and chiefly the brilliance of his horsemanship discounted the fact that he was blind of one eye.

CHAPTER X

1923-1929

RULE

As the decade wore on, political events in India moved with an ever-increasing momentum. The battle for prospective power between the Moslems and Hindus became starker, their opportunist alliance over the Khalifate question lay dead at the bottom of a chasm. Congress candidates, who in the first seasons had boycotted elections, stood for election to the Provincial Councils and later to the Legislative Assembly with the constructive intention of disrupting the new machinery granted under the Act of 1919. By qualifying themselves as wreckers they trusted to prove themselves fit to rule. In the West, reaction labelled reform was already acquiring the names of Fascism and Nazism.

In 1924 there were two new suggestions in the air. One was the idea of a Round Table Conference: this conception was aired in the Legislative Assembly, which contained many old-fashioned Indian Liberals and a growing tincture of Swarajists. The other idea was canvassed by the newly re-created Moslem League, and this was the idea of Federation.

The more active-minded princes considered these two ideas more or less seriously, for the contingency was still remote. Yet not perhaps so very remote: for England was now reaching the final stages of her wish to give self-government to India, in the anticipation of an Act which would confer the effect if not yet the name of Dominion Status on the land.

A general Conference might serve the Princes, Federation might suit them. On their Treaty Rights they would insist: but the more thoughtful saw that no barrier could be set up between themselves and British India against the exchange of ideas and the improvement of conditions. There was nothing whatever to stop the peasant of a mediæval *raj* from walking out or an agitator from walking in: there are no land-barriers in India. The Swaraj party would not neglect to stir up the populations of the States: indeed, the more sincere they were the more they were bound to do so. It was no good arguing that the people of the States liked the picturesque justice of the *durbar* and that it suited them to work for rewards in kind without specified pay and that they loved the pomp of their princes. All this is true, and a patriarchal tyranny can be very benevolent and very suitable for backward peoples: but under a benevolent despotism the people have no merit, as under a malignant despotism they have no redress.

It began to be clear that, for good or evil, the prince who would remain upon his throne must clip his wings, set up councils, educate his people to be responsible, become a constitutional monarch: one here and one there was already attempting this. The times were changing, an inexorable, ineluctable change. The last hour of the last absolute monarchs was striking.

Surthawara took note of all this, and being a clear-sighted man, he saw that he must be in the van of those sponsoring constitutionalism. He saw equally clearly that the Swarajists were not quite the disinterested nationalists they claimed to be, but largely men of the middle castes clamouring for power.

"Mr Gandhi," said he, in one of his speeches, delivered in English before the Chamber of Princes, "claims to represent over eighty per cent of the peoples of India. How can this be, when between twenty five and thirty per cent are Moslems, not, if one may believe the Moslem League, lovers of the Congress? Perhaps, of course, the Congress really does know what the Moslems want better than the Moslems do, but then the British believe they know what India wants better than India does, and Congress does not therefore abet the British. Again, how can Congress represent eighty per cent of India when only ten per cent of two-thirds of India is enfranchised?—The remaining third, gentlemen, being the States—Congress claims to speak in the behalf of the unenfranchised ninety per cent of the two-thirds. Britain claims to rule in their interest. Who is in the right of it? Mr Gandhi claims to represent the 'dumb, toiling millions.' Since they certainly are dumb, what does he know about it? No more than we. If he can divine their interest, so can you, so can I, and better, perhaps, since they are our immemorial charge."

"Nevertheless, gentlemen, the new times are upon us. India was civilised when the West was barbarian. Older than Rome, older than Greece, are we to be left behind now? Patriarchy is done—we must educate our peoples to handle their own destiny, else we are usurpers, not guardians. You in your lands, I in mine——"

Such was the tenor of his speeches, and the Swarajists disliked him mightily and called him and his like traitors, the Trojan Horses of the British and other miscellaneous names.

"All the same," said Surthawara in private conversation, "it can't go as fast as all that. One would have to uproot the religion of the land before one could alter the resignation of the masses. It's a hot country—we don't all live to the north where it needs at least some effort to keep warm, and not a tenth of the peninsula's population has the assurance and privilege of being Rajputs."

He laughed, engagingly. He was talking with the Maharajah of Jandore, the enlightened ruler of one of the northern States of Rajputana. Jandore was a very fine man of forty-five or thereabouts, as celebrated for his rule as for his sportmanship. Surthawara greatly admired him, and intended to surpass him. There was only one place he coveted, one place that suited him, and that was the foremost.

Jandore looked at the younger man with a benevolent and massive expression, smiling.

"You are right," he said, "we can only go slowly. The politicians of British India can clamour for the turn-over of power in a year or five years—power may be seized overnight—but one cannot rebuild a civilization even in a generation."

"Clamour, I think," rejoined Surthawara, with the arrogance of his breeding, "is the kernel of your observations. It is chiefly clamour. They have notably not yet produced a single scheme or constitution. Clamour is not perhaps the best part of valour, but we must match them; we must excel in the forensic art. For myself I decline to be out-Hypatia'ed by a crowd of post-hungry failures."

He laughed as he spoke. Jandore laughed too, amused. It was difficult not to be charmed by so handsome and lively a man, but behind his amusement was a certain thoughtfulness, as of judgment reserved.

With the trophies of another session, from his point of view successful, Surthawara went home to overhaul the doings of his State single-handed, till the dullness of the work overcame him and he left it to his officials again.

At home, Surthawara was beginning to enlarge his pleasures by entertaining and by taking up an interest in horse-racing. The horse is still the Rajput's glory and where he can indulge his taste, it may still be his divinity. His polo-team was well-set and in another season or two he looked to replace the one or two less brilliant members with men still in their promising youth, and then he intended to take his team over India and in one major season sweep in the laurels of all possible events. They had now played in public for two years, but not entirely to win, and seasoning themselves, not showing their full brilliance. These men, drawn from his greater and lesser nobles, were in general his companions, eight or nine of them always about his person. They were lodged in the Palace, generally without their wives, but to the wives of the most favoured hospitality was occasionally offered, though of course many of the nobles possessed houses in the town and lodged there with their own suites. Tara Devi had the casting vote in the matter of which men's wives were accommodated in the Palace. In general she looked only to please her husband by pleasing his friends, but in the case of one or two women, there was friendship of her own in question. Most often the men came single and their prince's hospitality at the Palace included the provision of women.

In the matter of horses, Surthawara's permanent favourite and henchman was Hamur of Rajboland, the eldest son of a great noble, one of the twelve. His other favourite was Bikramajit of Dol. Bikramajit's father Durjansal owned nothing but the few skins of land on which his dilapidated house stood above the village of Dol, but Bikramajit was the most brilliant of all the coming team, and excelled in all the sport: where riding entered, and in the matter of horses, he possessed what amounted to divination. The maddest stallion of the stables came gentle to his touch, in a case of illness or injury his unlettered instinct could be backed against the diagnosis and prescription of the best qualified horse-doctors, and in picking horses he was infallible. This was the lad who had attracted his prince's notice at

that Abern nine or ten years ago, when he and his father were in attendance on their overlord. Then Raemall had been pleased at the story of the horse of Dol and on seeking his team, had remembered his promise and found out the young man.

Hamir of Rajboland, wealthy and of illustrious descent, shared Surthawara's ambitions of the polo-field and the race-course. He was his lieutenant. He took charge of the work of the teams and now of the construction of the racing-ground. Bikramajit of Dol cared little for these ambitions as adding to the glory of his prince or the young lord, but only in so far as they magnified the glory of the horses. He was master of the stables and when Surthawara was looking out for new polo ponies, and now for a racing string, it was Rajboland who did the business and coped with the dealers from the north-west or the British officers of the cavalry regiments, but it was Bikramajit who advised upon the horses.

It was a curious friendship, but a firm one. Surthawara in search of fame, Rajboland exceedingly dissolute but as tough as steel, Bikramajit of Dol with the plain private life and pretensions of a villager and the poetry of his soul given to horses.

Tara Devi liked Bikramajit, she liked his wife and she liked his little boy and his baby girl. He had been married at seventeen to a girl of fourteen. Bikramajit was one of the two or three men whom she suffered in her presence. Rajboland, in spite of her husband's instances and his declaration that Rajboland was his brother, she refused to see. She always accorded a formal reception to Rajboland's wife, on the very rare occasions that this lady came down from her father-in-law's house, for Rajboland did not care for her intrusion into his city life. But Rajboland himself Tara Devi would not receive.

In was in the autumn of 1924 that the two polo-teams of Surthawara were ready to take the field. Both had made their debut in the preceding years, to accustom themselves to public events. But they had not played all out, and from Rajboland to the youngest *sais* there was a conspiracy of unobtrusiveness among them. Other teams were not yet asked to play at Surthawara. There was a great panel of good horsemen in the State, and a varied opposition could be drawn from them. Both in the two teams and the rejected many, there was an unusual absence of jealousy, which in India may easily, on any pretext, run to the foul extreme. This had not always been so, but dated—a fact which Raemall was able to appreciate—from some time soon after the coming of Bikramajit. Bikramajit was quite the youngest of the galaxy, but he possessed that power which belongs to men who have lost their selves. Such men consist of this or that sort of knowledge wedded to an idea. They cannot be resented and scarcely resisted. Bikramajit's knowledge was of horses and his idea was to glorify them in the coming events. And the jealous men of Surthawara ceded their personal ambitions in favour of the team.

Now they entered for the great challenges of the Indian cold weather.

Calcutta, Meerut, Poona, Lahore, Delhi Their opponents were the British regimental teams, the Indian regimental teams, the Indian States' teams, and the one Moslem team Of these the most formidable were the teams put up by Tanner's Horse and the Sikhs

The teams broke suddenly upon the polo world they were down for every event that geography and transport allowed of speculation went before them, and as victory was added to victory, renown began to clang her wings above them, till they were a sensation and unwonted crowds came to watch the Surthawara events

The last events were for the Challenge Cup at Delhi, against the two teams named above

Tanner's Horse—originally a free-lance organisation, still highly independent in character, and founded before the Mutiny—had a fine team in the field that year they met Surthawara in the semi-finals

The crowd was large, the stands packed with the usual collection of European women in smart shady hats and flimsy dresses, with parasols, chattering this and that to officers from the cantonments or officials from the Secretariat a few highly-placed Indian ministers or officials with or without their wives it was all *crêpe-de-chine*, smart tropical surtings, topees and panamas, pipeclayed buckskin, immaculate white riding-breeches and glossy leather, ice clinking in glasses, the reek of a Turkish cigarette, the Viceroy and Lady and the aides and ladies of gentlemen of the Viceregal party the Viceroy very distinguished in his grey topper, he and his party conveying some touch of Ascot or the Derby and an unusually large attendance of Indians from the States, all men, come to see the finals tall Rajputs Mahrattas of shorter stature, quick-eyed and smother of face and Sikhs, spare and bearded, in their sashes the knife and on their wrist the iron bangle of fidelity, a Punjab Jat stock all gifted with fine looks and all with so much of a likeness that you would say all the thousands of them were brothers—which indeed they, with the Rajputs, substantially are

And among the crowd, the little old lady of seventy-two who was the wife of a former Colonel of Tanner's Horse and is the mother of the present Colonel of Tanner's Horse, who has retired to a cavalry-station in the United Provinces, where she lives in a large pre-Mutiny bungalow, surrounded by the tigers and leopards that have fallen to her gun in those tiger-ridden hills, which she used to stalk afoot by day with her husband and not only the great cats but pig, for in 1880 she was a famous pig-sticker You would not think it, for she is a little lady and fragile

"That team of Surthawara's is going to win, Teddy," she was saying to her son the Colonel, inspecting the teams through her lorgnette, while her grandson, the Colonel's son, a lieutenant, stood behind her chair, "it's all up bar the shouting first-class ponies and so many wizards astride them—Yes, that's the best team I've seen since your father's team in 1891, and that was the best team ever seen in India, white or native"

"Well, don't discourage us, mother," said the grizzled Colonel, laughing.

"Discourage you?" said the old lady sharply "Aha, if I wanted to discourage you, I'd tell you something else"

"And what's that, Madam?" asked a Major on her other side, and the attendant lieutenants and captains smiled expectantly for she was the regimental darling

She leaned towards the Major and tapped his sleeve with her lorgnette

"Mark my words," she said "You won't see much more of this it will become only a game Mechanisation, my dears You may resist it till we have almost lost the next war, as usual—I've seen a number of wars—but the end will be a handful of cavalry here and there, to round up a riot and tanks, tanks, tanks, tanks, tanks"

The cavalymen found this a diverting vision

They were off the thunder of the ponies, the whack of the stick on the ball, the game flashing up and down the field, quick wits outspeeding the flying ball and the tearing gallop, steel wrists and steel pasterns the Scythian sweeps down into Greece and up the Danube and across the Channel and pours over the Hindu Kush into India, and three thousand years later the immortal centaur discovers his brother and still plays the most magnificent of games

The horsemen had changed, the chukkas were over, Surthawara had defeated Tanner's Horse, and the Sikhs had won their event

"They're fine chaps, sir," said the captain of the team, coming up to his Colonel "They play a really beautiful game They'll beat the Sikhs Here's H H coming to speak to you"

Surthawara came up, congratulating the Colonel on his team, and on being introduced to the old lady (who at once gave herself her titles of wife and mother of colonels of Tanner's Horse, a grandmother of lieutenants, and a pig-sticker on her own account) treated her with the most extreme respect Her eyes danced

"I've watched polo since I was eighteen, your Highness," she said, "and as I was telling my son, this is the best team India has seen since 1891 There's not another team like your first team in the world to-day Well, go and beat the Sikhs. they deserve to be beaten, they're a ruffianly lot"

There was a general expostulation

"I'm an old woman," she said, "I can say what I think I'm a great admirer of the Sikhs, my father fought against them with Sir Walter Gilbert, and I may say I know their rulers but this team is not the best the Sikhs can do It's a team of favourites and ruffians congenial to their master Beat them by all means, Maharajah Sahib—but take care and I hope some day you will meet a Sikh team of this merite and also of the same character as yours"

She gave him her hand, with a smile that was at once maternal and still full of attraction

When he had gone she turned to her son and said privately, not

acting her character at all, "What a superb man, Teddy but I'm afraid that one day he'll be bringing his own team of favourite ruffians to the field"

Surthawara carried the day against the Sikhs, they were brilliant and dangerous players, though not up to the record of their people in certain other respects, and he knew that in spite of all the fulsome bonhomie exchanged, the prince their master was and now would always be his personal enemy

So he returned home, having won every challenge taken up by either team, and concluding with the great event at royal Delhi full of dramatic honours and praise, ambition fulfilled, the darling glory of the Rajput his

Pabu the bard had new songs to sing, the sisterhood of song new quatrains to compose. and the people repeated the verses of the dancers and the bards

In the following years Surthawara began to entertain. It began with visiting polo-teams, and expanded into hunting-parties then came the great shoots, for the State, bordering upon the Indian desert, possessed two meres where the migratory grouse, in transit from southern India to Persia, used to break their long journey. The polo-teams might be Indian or European, the guests of the hunting-parties were more often drawn from kindred States though sometimes the English came too, when Surthawara found such as could compete with his break-neck enterprise or the perilous following of game afoot, which he himself much preferred to sitting up in a *machan* over a kill. the parties for the great grouse-shoots were always European. "Safe sport," he called this but the grouse is one of the fastest targets on the wing. Picnics were also organised for the guests, but if they had individual inclinations to see ruins or what not, they were instantly met. The hospitality of the East, where the guests' whim is the host's delighted obligation, is entirely beyond the present standards of the West. Besides these parties, the State Guest House (an old palace) always stood open. any visitor might stay, provided some sort of notice or introduction preceded him or her. servants were in attendance and conveyances and companions or guides at disposition. If the prince of a State thinks the visitor of sufficient interest, he makes a personal advance.

At this time there was a Frenchman travelling in India, the Duc de Montchazon, and he devolved upon Surthawara in the course of his tour, bearing letters of introduction from mutual Anglo-Indian acquaintances.

Surthawara knew something of this nobleman that he was a very great aristocrat, a Royalist, a fine shot. He himself knew the French tongue and wished to try out his accomplishment. He treated this guest like a prince.

The Duc de Montchazon turned out to be a man of forty-five or so, very highly bred, elegant in person, as good a shot as he was reputed

and a good horseman. He was also a master in sword-play, but here Surthawara could not follow though he could appreciate the way he held certain old French rapiers in the armoury. The Duc consented to give him his first lesson in fencing, and was astonished at the agile aptitude of his pupil. But he for his part could do nothing with the iron sword of Jaswant.

This was the first time he had been entertained by Indian royalty in person, though he had visited two other States. He was impressed. In the course of several days they became friendly, so far as friendship can be achieved by a Frenchman who is profoundly cynical about his own day and manner of living and dedicates to a dead and largely discreditable state of society an unreasonably romantic devotion.

"My own estate," he observed, towards the end of his visit, "lies in the hills above Saumur. When you visit Europe, Highness, you must allow me to entertain you. I feel there is a kinship between your society and that in which I live—we are a narrow circle, we of the past, but we shall understand one another. I have forgotten to mention, by the way, that I met a compatriot of yours at a friend's house. You will scarcely be likely to know him—one thing I am clear about—India is very large."

"Indeed," said Raemall, "do you remember his name?"

"Let me think. A pleasant fellow. A prince, I was told—probably you will know him after all—but he was not known by a title. His name was Sangram Singh, I believe. I forget the principality, those things meant nothing to me then."

"That is my younger brother," said Raemall, at once secretly excited, not knowing whether he was pleased or vexed to hear of him. "He is in the cavalry schools of Saumur. Was he well?"

"Very well, apparently. It is astonishing! But why choose Saumur? Of course, some men of good family still join the French cavalry—nevertheless, it is all under the Republic—it is not the true France."

"We should probably have chosen the Imperial Schools at Vienna, if the war had not intervened."

"Ah, much more suitable. Alas, all the old traditions are being shattered. Believe me, Highness," said the Frenchman, waving his elegant hand at the billiard-room, "this is the only survival of true royalty. I am a Royalist, my flag is the lilies of France on a blue field. All the royalty of the north of Europe, England included, is a base bourgeoisie—the Hohenzollerns, such as they were—Germans are a coarse race—have gone—the throne of Spain shakes—the Czar is murdered, the Hapsburgs fled. The throne of Austria was the greatest in the world, next to the throne of France. I can speak to you in this fashion, sir, for here I am in the world of which I dream. I had never thought to see it again."

Raemall was intensely flattered by this extraordinary credo. Whatever heart this aristocrat possessed—dry or deformed—he had momentarily forgotten his reserve and spoken from it. Raemall understood

this idiom. He knew European history extremely well, and to be classed with the Kings and Emperors of Europe was no mean compliment. It never occurred to him that the Frenchman's view was chimerical.

He had received many compliments upon his appointments, his entourage, the beauty and treasure that accumulates like an incrustation in India—the shoddiness of the villages and the character of the cultivation were overlooked by the nobleman with his eighteenth-century mind. Raemall was intoxicated with delight. This man—a European after all, and used to it—should see the true treasure. Tara Devi

Tara Devi, of course, had seen more than a little of the Duc de Montchazon, and followed his speech as well.

"I do not think," she said to Raemall, "that I want to receive him."

"My heart," said Raemall, "I wish it so much. It is not like the others. In his life the women appear with the men."

"In our life, however, we do not."

"That is open to question. I have spoken before of the views of my father and his first wife, whom I deeply respected. We must talk more seriously of that later on. In the present case I should be very happy if you would receive this gentleman."

Tara Devi rose, with a sudden and most unusual moodiness, and crossed over to a long mirror that hung on the wall. She looked at herself in it, and without smiling, she adjusted the vivid geranium in her hair. Looking at him behind her in the mirror, she exclaimed, "What am I? The rose of roses, the silk of silks, the gem of gems!"

Raemall did not stop to be puzzled by her accent. He followed her and stood behind her in the mirror and looked at both of them. He was dressed in the long satin coat of India, apricot-coloured, and she in palest blue, jewelled with gold. Surely no mirror had ever reflected a more beautiful pair.

"Thou art Tara Devi," he whispered, "star and goddess."

Laughter returned into her lustrous dark eyes, and she bent back her head against him.

"Bring me thy duke, my lord," she said, "bring me thy Frenchman when thou wilt."

At the time arranged, in the cool towards sunset, Raemall brought the Frenchman to Tara Devi in a high garden-court. He had before this entertained him with some beautiful dancers, and de Montchazon had spoken on the subject of woman and beauty as the French do, that is to say, technically and yet in a way soulfully. It was a subject in which he showed himself experienced, proficient, and exceedingly fastidious. Raemall, with a hauteur that surpassed anything the Duc had experienced from royalty, had made it clear that to see a Maharani not out of purdah was a privilege second to none. He now watched the upshot with intense anticipation.

Tara Devi, the princess of Chamunnar, received him composedly. She answered a few questions, she asked a few. She was content to

say very little but her silence was not tongue-tied. The men talked together, presently she smiled. The sun set, rosily the light failed, and she glimmered in the dusk. the hanging Persian lamps were lit, and she glowed in the soft radiance.

When Raemall rose to take his guest away, she, having heard of the practice, defied the censure of her country and held out her henna-palmed hand to be kissed, and over the bent head of the elderly aristocrat she shot at her husband such a glance of mischief and mockery that he had to turn away to hide his laughter.

But he was well pleased with the homage accorded by the foreigner to Tara Devi. For the Frenchman's manners had not been proof. the first sight of Tara Devi had halted his step and confused him, his convention struggling with his desire to gaze. his questions were inconsequent, he did not attend to her answers. twice he lost the thread of his observations for having looked at her. when she smiled, he was startled. when the light failed, he took advantage of it. when the lamps came, he shifted so that his face was in shadow and she well in view. When in parting he touched her fingers, a tremor shook his hand, he had done it very beautifully and very slowly, and the husband saw that there was religion in his act.

Tara Devi reaped all her lord's delight in this crowning compliment, his guest's loss of composure before his wife.

"Nevertheless," she said, "I do not like it. I do not like it."

"Why not, light of my eyes? Why in the world not?"

Tara Devi paused.

"I do not know," she said, "I do not know. It has degraded me. And thee in me."

Raemall, however, did not pay much attention to Tara Devi's repugnance. She had had this effect upon every man of the few who came before her, including Bikramajit of Dol, with his curious innocence or purity. in a different way but as decidedly, she arrested the women, whether they were wives of his vassals or the European women who came with their husbands to the house-parties, or who visited at the Residency. He knew now that she was his most sovereign and sensational possession, and he wished her to be seen.

He began to urge her to come out of purdah, if not completely, then partly, as his father's first wife had done. At least, he urged, to the extent of the Palace grounds and before his guests. And perhaps outside the State, or at least in Delhi society. And when they went to Europe, she would be quite out.

"No," she said, and no, and no, and no. "I will meet the women or you, but I will not come before men."

"But why not? Such foolishness! It is foolishness!"

"I do not care to be seen of men."

"Child, child! You will become accustomed to their attention. it is your due."

“ I do not care for it ”

“ It is senseless for you to be shut away The women are coming out now it is right you should lead The Senior Maharani said that in old India this was not so I have told you before You know our old tales and ballads as well as I do the women were never shut away, till the Moslems came Your seclusion is a mistaken thing In the greater part of India, in the south and west, it is not so to this day It is right to take your place in society Surely your wit and virtue are no less than those of our ancestresses ”

“ For others may be it is right, for me I think it is not right ”

“ Now what do you mean ? ”

Tara Devi hesitated

“ With good men, I do not mind With your brother Sangram or Bikramajit and the like I do not mind But with other men or all men, no ”

Raemall passed over the reference to Sangram, for he wished to have his will

“ Tara Devi,” he said gently, “ what frightens you is the desire of men It must not I shall always be with you, make no mistake Besides, as I said before, it is just tribute ”

Tara Devi flushed

“ I do not wish to be desired by any man but my lord my husband,” she said, low-voiced, her eyes on the floor “ That is it If they look at me so, I am shamed For another it could go without that, but for me, thou knowest it, thou hast seen it, it cannot ”

Raemall looked at her perplexed, a little angry She refused to come out for the very reason that he wanted her out

“ I could command thee,” he said at last

Tara Devi rose and stood away out of his reach She clasped her hands palm to palm, in the gesture of supplication, and there were tears in her eyes but she stood straight and proud

“ I am of Chamunnar,” she said

So Surthawara went back to his politics at Delhi without his wife, and now that he had conceived the idea of taking her out publicly it was an exasperation not to do so He envied the few princes who brought emancipated ladies with them and every woman he saw, European or Indian, he compared to Tara Devi in beauty and finish, and he found them wanting If only she would consent ! It would be as sweet to him as the triumphs of his polo-team

This was the year when the Simon Commission was appointed, in response to the threatening explosion

Surthawara, seeing that an increasing amount of his time was being taken up in the political game, and beginning, now that his work as ruler had become so much tamer, to desire greater indulgence in sport and hospitality, had made an important administrative change he had terminated the appointment of the man who had been Diwan

during his early years—a worthy but unenterprising individual, not of the State, not a Rajput, who had been recommended by the Government—and had appointed the son of that Kishan of Reolia who had attended his birth. Partab of Reolia was aged fifty-six or so, a man of ability and integrity, well fitted to execute the office and take on the guardianship of the capital and realm during his lord's absences. In administration he was not required to be original. The family of Reolia had always been to the fore in the service of the sovereign, and ranked high among the twelve clans of major nobility, and no question would have arisen, had it not been for the earlier Surthawara custom of making the office of Diwan hereditary in a favoured family. It had never been the custom in Surthawara to appoint the office to a non-Rajput, as was the case in many other Rajput States. Raemall's grandfather had first departed from the Surthawara habit, at the urgent instance of the Raj: he had been ambitious of power himself, and the chief exercising the office was arrogant and mischievous. Raemall's father, the Maharajah Lakshman Singh, had finally broken with the hereditary custom, nor had it been resumed by the regent Maharanis, as has been seen. The family in which it had been hereditary was that house of which the clan-chief was the father of Hamir of Rajboland: but while he cherished Rajboland, Raemall was quite awake to the damage done in the past to the State by the institution of a hereditary premiership. Besides, he had other uses for Hamir of Rajboland. Surthawara, therefore, now went to Delhi, leaving his State in the charge of Partab of Reolia and his wife in the State.

"The attack on us has begun, eh?" said the Maharajah of Jandore to Surthawara as soon as they met at the capital. "What do you think of the 'Indian States' People's Conference'? How does it affect your State?"

"We are not patronising the Indian States' People's Conference," replied Surthawara, laughing. "Congress could hold the Conference in Surthawara, and I don't think they would get much attention."

Chamunnar himself joined them, drawn into events by the gravity of the times. They talked English, as is usual to political occasions. All treated Chamunnar with deference for the sake of his illustrious pre-eminence.

"I think," he said, "that we should invite legal opinion as to how we all stand with the Raj. We each have separate treaties, though probably they are all substantially the same."

"I was looking over the clauses of my treaty," observed Jandore. "In sum, the agreement is, that if I keep down robbery and disorder to the advantage of trade and don't fight or unite with my neighbours, my State is guaranteed independence and protection."

"That is so," agreed Surthawara. "And if we cannot put down our own disorders, the Raj lends us help and we pay for it on the nail or out of revenue, and in any case pay contribution towards the maintenance of the forces of the Raj to protect the continent."

"It has to be recollected," said Jandore, "that all our several

treates were drawn up soon after the French revolution, when absolute monarchy was still an accepted form of government. Myself, seeing that it is no longer anywhere an accepted form of government, I consider the only solution to be a constitutional monarchy. That would suit us—it gives a sentimental focus for a realm—much healthier and not so bloodless as a succession of ministers whose appointment is subject to canvassing and who are so neutral as to be fossils. Fun and glory would not utterly vanish, and our people adore a show. Even the British love the Trooping of the Colour, or a coronation, or a jubilee.”

“I confess,” said Chamunnar, “that to be a constitutional ruler would not please me—but for us Rajputs, with our feudal obligations and limitations, it can come much more easily than for the unmitigated despots. I believe you are in the right of it, Maharajah Sahib, and perhaps one ought to give the lead. But it cannot go fast, in a country like this—it will take a generation to tide us over, at least. I think, therefore, that we should press for a legal examination of our position. I do not think that England can escape the obligation. Time we must have. We must have time.”

Any view adopted by Chamunnar was bound to carry prestige among the Rajput princes—and indeed among others too.

This plan of a legal examination was adopted, and the Congress politicians disliked the move extremely. They declared again that the Princes were traitors to the cause of India, schismatics, egoists, grinders of the faces of the poor, the cat's paw of the British, the Ulster of India, and again traitors. They began to work among the States in earnest, meeting with rather moderate success, for if you do not like your State, you can simply walk out of it, and the States did not encourage agitators to walk in. Next year the Simon Commission came out to India and Congress refused to cooperate or to answer questions before it—it boycotted the Commission.

In the year of the Simon Commission, however, the Motilal Nehru Committee produced its Report, with a draft Constitution for India. This was the work of the father of Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's follower. The senior Nehru was distinguished by his clear and practical political thinking.

“Well, my young friend,” said Jandore when he met Surthawara again, as it happened in the presence of several other rulers, “your Congress cronies have produced something constructive now. What do you think of the Report?”

“I note,” replied Surthawara, “that we are warned that our peoples will not ‘quietly submit to existing conditions for ever.’”

His tone elicited laughter.

“Well, they won't,” corroborated Jandore.

The satellites looked perturbed.

“Are you becoming a Congressman, Highness? You will be the success of the season.”

They laughed.

“I may be a prince,” replied Jandore, “but I can see necessity

as well as any British Indian politician You can keep two blocks of ice separate side by side but the temperature has gone up : water flows together What is in British India must also be in the States Perhaps we have something to give them too We have intelligence, but we are not of the intelligentsia, we of the north and west possess energy and character in our realms, religion is not suffered to quarrel To my mind, it is in us that the true genius of India resides the true genius But certainly the politicians are right to warn us that we must progressively realise responsible government We must keep pace, or fall out of the march It is some years now since I began by trying to teach my villagers to vote for mayors, rotate them, and run their own affairs It goes slowly, but it is coming it must come, for what is it but an education of our *panchayats* ? It is absolutely necessary to start at the bottom, if revolution is to be avoided —But I know you particularly agree with me I am beating the air —Tell me, what else did you think ? ”

He continued to address Surthawara they were acknowledged leaders

“ I noted what looks like a suggestion of federation That is good, federation would give us a chance to arrive at our different times, Provinces and States alike ”

“ I agree ” Several echoes

“ The Moslems are well treated ”

“ I agree If only they and we could both avoid processions and religious fasts and din ! ”

The group laughed regretfully How impossible !

“ The aim is Dominion Status That is good ”

“ It is good But though the Nehru Committee aims at Dominion Status to-day, I think we shall see that Mr Gandhi and followers want absolute independence ”

“ *Entre nous*, in fact,” said Surthawara, glancing at the group, “ I think Mr Gandhi wants to be Mahatma-Maharajah of All India He is a notoriously modest man —Seriously, Highness, the point they leave quite in the air is Defence Who is going to defend India when the British depart ? Our teeth were drawn long ago The officering of Indian Regiments by Indians has not gone far enough yet you can’t jump captains into colonelcies in a year or two —As a cognate speculation, one may note the fact that the age at which a soldier comes to responsible command, is exactly the age at which we of this climate begin to flag and luxuriate —And you can’t recruit and train regiments in a year or two We have one of the most dangerous land-frontiers in the world The British have never been mercenaries besides, we should never pay them as long as there is a white regiment in India, the British Parliament has a right in India, and a right to guide foreign policy too Unless, of course, they set us up independently—which would be good—but continue to lend us garnisons and personnel You can’t get round that, and that is what the Nehru Report overlooks ”

This was a just criticism, and the group broke up into separate discussions

By the end of that year, Congress in its December session named its goal complete independence, issued an open challenge to the Princes, and declared its sympathy with the struggle of the peoples of the States. The peoples of the States themselves seemed sunk in what some called content and others apathy.

Surthawara returned home and this time lent a more attentive ear than usual at his durbars and undertook a tour of justice. He went into the administration thoroughly and brought out a policy similar to the village policy developing in Jandrore. It looked extremely impressive on paper. He rearranged his Durbar, changed its functions a little, and called it The People's Council.

He went up to Jalankar with Tara Devi. The palace was ready to furnish (one wing had not been built), the lake nearly full. There was now some water to spare for the lower valley, but the three years' famine predicted by Sangram had occurred and had been allayed by State measures. There was bitterness.

The lake was looking green at the edges, young bushes of oleander were growing, and tamarisk.

"You shall select some carpets for the palace," said Raemall to Tara Devi, "from among the pile of the priceless ones. We will go down to Bombay and choose European furniture, but it will be only makeshift, for I will have the real furniture from Europe when I go on my tour."

"And my little palace on the island, to make it feel like Karandola?"

"You shall have your little palace, I held a competition for the design and it is the loveliest of all. It shall be ready for your first visit. The masons have long been at work on all the carving. I have my plan about it. It will go up very quickly. You shall see it entire when it is ready and furnished. It will be my especial present to you. I have already stocked the lake with fish, and they will bring your birds for you."

Tara Devi smiled and thanked him, and then the smile faded as she looked at the shining expanse of water, that mirrored the craggy rose-quartz peaks.

"How strange," she said, "to think of the villages that are at the bottom of the lake."

"Mud walls," replied Raemall, "have joined the mud floor." His glance roamed over the valley. "It lacks trees," he said, "there is no cover for game here. Over that low saddle there is another valley, flat and open and well watered. I could set a good forest there, and it is no distance over the ridge. The Government has brought out a policy for reafforestation, to attract rainfall to the deserts." He smiled. "I had not thought of troubling about it, but I will pursue their policy of reafforestation, here and over there in the next valley. Yes. I will pursue it on a large scale. I need cover."

There was a pause

"Where," asked Tara Devi, "have the Mers gone, whose villages are under the lake?"

"Over there, I expect, over the saddle into the next valley, to join their friends"

There was another pause

"Where," asked Tara Devi, "will they go when you lay the land under forest?"

"Wherever they fancy," said Raemall, and then laughed and added, "They can go into British India if they like there they can learn about responsible government"

In the next year the breach between Moslem and Hindu widened abruptly disturbances became exceedingly grave Lord Irwin proposed that a Round Table Conference should be held in the following year, 1930

CHAPTER XI

1930

THE BLACK WATER

THE year 1930 was a furious and historic year the confused orchestra of Indian politics rising to a yet more violent pitch In April Mr Gandhi launched a civil disobedience campaign Mr Muhammad Ali, from the chair of the All-India Moslem Conference, roundly attacked his policy. In May the Simon Commission issued its Report The Round Table Conference was due to open in London in November Congress would not attend, since it had asked in advance for "predominant representation," and this request was not granted

Surthawara was to the fore Of Mr Gandhi he said, "You have to be a saint before you can pass off picketing and terrorism and murder as peaceful" Of the Simon Report he said, "It is a superb piece of reasoning it is the monument of a man with scrivener's ink in his veins" Of Lord Irwin he said, "He has a halo of white gold" Of the Moslems he said, "They are waking up they have perceived that Mussolini is after the Sword of Islam and the little barrister from South Africa after the Throne of the Moguls" Of the British he said, "They have the most uncomfortable job in history they are holding us against their will" He also said of them, "The British are our very good friends nevertheless, let me name their greatest service to India They have supplied us with a focus for dislike, a cause against which we may unite to struggle in our different ways" Of his own peers, he said, "They malign us we are not Louis the Fourteenth of France After us—the rains"

These and other observations, some lighter, some more serious, all with truth in them, were quoted and laughed over and absorbed they became currency. He made two or three speeches packed with salt, full of vision and purpose. He not only aimed but demonstrated himself to be the spokesman of the Princes. He matched the crisis with his brilliance.

He achieved his ambition.

With Jandrore and others, he was delegated to the Round Table Conference as a representative of his Order.

He returned to the State in a mood of extreme elation. The administration was as usual working adequately to the point of dullness. He looked over the statement of the policy for the development of responsibility in the villages, and having done nothing further for a year, now appointed three men to go round and examine the workings of the existing *panchayats* and the functions of the headmen and *patels*, in order to produce a report to be ready before November if possible, but if not, against his return from Europe next year. He also appointed a young London-trained lawyer to go round with the three and lecture on Political Responsibility. The Committee thus appointed settled down to draw up its programme of examination, to decide its itinerary, and to plan its lecture.

The People's Council was duly held, and a cynic might have suspected a lingering likeness to the Prince's Durbar.

Then Raemall hastened on his private schemes. Jalankar Palace (one wing to be built at a later date) was to be ready for habitation by September. The toy palace on the island was also to be ready. He planned a great fair to placate the valley below the *bund*, for their discontent at the loss of three years' water had proved unexpectedly serious—not that he had given their sentiments enough consideration to expect anything. The rains being shortly due, he recruited an army of planters, arranged irrigation channels in the next valley, and made the final arrangements with his own estate and other dealers in the Himalayas for a great supply of young trees of the right kind to be delivered at the right moment. He had his racecourse ready to be planted out with the best obtainable tropical knot-grass. He conferred closely with Rajboland about the polo-events. But political glory had cut across polo glory—how was it to be settled? He overhauled his wardrobe and had long sessions with the hereditary weavers and tailors of the royal house—weavers whose families possessed the secrets of fabrics made only for the ruler and his zenana—he decided in favour of his native style for almost all occasions—he looked over his jewels—they should be few, but magnificent, and some must be re-set in Bombay or Calcutta. He made a special selection for Tara Devi, to be cut and set. He had made up his mind about Tara Devi.

All these undertakings were exceedingly expensive, and the expenses were not offset by increased prosperity. The world slump had adversely affected the trade of Surthawara, which was only now picking

up again · his father's scheme of agriculture had slid out of sight during his mother's Regency and continued in name but not in practice. The horses were paid for as they were bought, but all the other undertakings were not paid with the exception of certain instalments. Commitments in the State—such as the weavers and tailors and jewellers and wood-carvers and masons—could largely be met in feudal style by the making over of revenue or the temporary grant of land. But he had lavishly contracted with expert services quite outside the State.

The time was coming when the full accounts would be presented

The hot weather was over, the rains had cleared, the great forest was well set, the festival of the opening of Jalankar was due. The country people travelled to the scene of the fair from great distances, on horseback, on mules, in open bullock-carts, in purdah camel-carts. Apart from a day set aside for the entertainment of the Resident and the Residency guests (the Resident was begged to fill his house) the affair was to be an Indian one and a State one, an affair between the ruler and his vassals. This greatly pleased the nobles. Later their prince would invite other princes to stay in the beautiful spot (he did not intend it for European entertainment) but first he honoured them.

For three days dust rose on the roads of Surthawara as the people moved, and in the lower valley sprang up an encampment of carts and ragged tents and camel hair shelters. There were booths and rough merry-go-rounds and beggars and faquirs. The people below Jalankar began to recoup some of their losses.

Then on the first day the State elephants, in full glory, came up from Meerapur, a procession a mile long, accompanied by a yelling holiday rabble that poured in off the route. On the first the Prince, glorious, glistening, and glittering, sitting in a howdah of solid gold. On the second a howdah of burnished silver, curtained with red, in which sat a person more beautiful than they could imagine. Then followed the twelve great nobles and the Diwan. After the elephants came the string of polo ponies. The polo ponies were groomed to a silky gloss, trapped in the European style, not embellished with daubs of fresh paint and embroidered cloth bridles like the horses of the people. Musicians flanked the procession, beating drums and blowing flutes. Among the miscellaneous following at the end was a band of priests, but most eminent and popular was the band of bards, heading all the varied tribe of *mangtas* that brought up the rear. Leading them was Pabu, singing and swaggering on a white country horse, his prince's gift for the occasion, whose mane and tail were freshly dyed with crimson and his coat adorned with crimson spots as big as saucers.

I will omit the ceremonies of installation.

Late in the afternoon, when she had already seen most of the palace, Tara Devi was taken down to the marble steps where a tall and brilliantly painted Indian barge was moored to a marble jetty. The prow was in the form of a horse's fore-quarters, the neck arched, the head

plumed and bridled the barge was fitted with an engine and Raemall conveyed her across to the island entirely alone. As the boat cut smoothly across the lake, the spotted fish swam from under them, an otter splashed into the water under a thicket of oleanders on the white-gemmed island. But he watched only her eyes filling with anticipation of delight. Was anything lovelier than Tara Devi under the painted poop of the extravagant barge?

On the island was a miniature palace, a miracle of fretwork and carved panels—the marble was brilliantly white, of very fine grain, and patterned with the dark green jade of Surthawara—and everywhere was a profusion of flowers, intersected by marble water-channels with a fountain jet under a toy pavilion at their central point. Not a servant, not a gardener—it was like an enchantment—there was nothing on the island but a blue kingfisher fishing beneath a tamarisk, and on the jetty three hoopoes running up and down, buff and banded, lifting and dropping thin crests and uttering their cry, hoopoe, hoopoe.

Tara Devi exclaimed again and again in rapture, running this way and that in the exquisite toy, herself as lovely as a firebird in her flamingo-coloured dress. The little palace had a great central chamber furnished with costly carpets and pillows, with tall arches giving on the water-terrace—outside a flight of ornamental stairs led to a roof-pavilion under a lotus cupola.

“Let us go up and watch the sunset from above,” suggested Raemall.

Up here was a bolstered couch, flat on the floor, facing down the valley. On the rich ancient embroideries lay a casket of sandalwood and gold.

“I think it may be for you,” smiled Raemall.

Tara Devi darted upon it. Inside were layers of crimson velvet and on each glittered and burned jewels set in the flashing manner of the West, jewels that an empress would covet. They ran between her fingers, they threw fire in the level sun. From the palace across the water came the music of instruments and voices singing—a little way out a black striped kingfisher flew up, hovered, and fell like a plummet upon his own reflection. Raemall, leaning against a pillar, could conceive nothing more beautiful than this girl, stooped in a billow of coral-coloured skirts, playing with her stones under a marble pavilion, against a background of silver lake and tawny mountain peaked with rose crystal against a draining azure sky.

That night and each night there were fireworks—there were polo-matches by day, the excited populace thick as grasshoppers on the rocks of the natural amphitheatre—there was a tiger-hunt on foot for the prince and his vassals—there were exhibitions of horsemanship—the Residency party came and went—and on the last afternoon there were sports for the people in a great flat space alongside and below the *bund*. A stand was erected for the nobility, half of it curtained for the women. The people squatted all up the embankment.

There were contests of riding, contests of archery, beggars' races,

wrestling bouts, races of skill, clowning races, tugs of war between teams on mules, buffalo races, camel races, relay races, obstacle races, even egg-and-spoon races, afoot and on horseback. Anyone could enter for anything, and the men of rank and accomplishment won easily in the riding events. Raemall, who was not taking part, but sitting in the front with the Diwan and senior vassals, saw this

"It is not just," he exclaimed. "Of course we can beat them so! It is dispiriting to the people." He stood. "I'll enter myself, on their terms." He stripped off his gold-sequined coat.

"Maharaj! Maharaj! It is impossible! It cannot be done!" they protested rising. "Maharaj! Maharaj! Bethink yourself!"

Surthawara brushed aside their remonstrances, laughing, and vaulted down twelve feet into the field.

"Bring me your nag!" he shouted to a Jat farmer.

Overhead he heard a handclap, a jingle of ankle-bells, and a sally of laughter. He did not look up at the curtain. That was Tara Devi, stamping her feet in pleasure.

On the farmer's nag he entered for the events. The mob laughed and shouted and clapped as he struggled with the hard-mouthed, reluctant beast. The young men of rank, not caring for an easy victory over him, fell out or borrowed country mounts. Tent-pegging became such a farce that the crowd laughed itself sick and the children rolled on the ground. The camels strolled haughtily through their races. The country people won their own events now, defeating prince and nobles alike, and the mood of the fair was the wild mood of the end of Holi. Surthawara entered for the wrestling, and he came up in the finals. The crowd rose to its feet and one continuous yell split the sky. His opponent was a mighty Rajput, the champion of the State and a great figure at the fairs. They met well-matched, the countryman tall and bony, naked save for a loin cloth, the prince shirtless, his square smooth shoulders and broad chest diminishing to the narrow waist. The muscles of the one were knotted under a skin tanned dark by the sun. The muscles of the other rippled smoothly under golden flesh.

"Such was Rama, the father of all Rajputs," cried an old soldier in the crowd, and they took it up, "Ram, Ram, *shri* Ram!"

It was a great match and the descendant of Jaswant came off victor. Amid the shouting he led his vanquished opponent to the dais and put his rich coat on his back for a gift and seated him beside himself. Brahman servants brought sherbet drinks and they rested, the country wrestler on a footing of equality with his kinsmen the prince and the nobles.

Other events took place.

The last race was being cried, the *bail-gharri* race, the race of the bullock-cart drivers.

"I'll enter the last race," said Raemall.

"Maharaj! this is completely impossible!" they cried, for it was the lowliest of the races "Besides, Maharaj has never driven a bullock!"

"Nonsense, I can drive a bullock I'll show them!" cried the prince, and again he was on the field and commandeered a seedy bullock in a cranky cart and lined up in the crick-tailed start

There was a yell, and they were off, standing up in the carts, prodding and whacking the bullocks and twisting their tails and the bullocks for once in their lives stampeded and galloped, and amid a roar that echoed among the peaks, Surthawara achieved another victory and won the bullock-cart race

That day even the bitter-hearted Mers softened towards him

To the island the people gave the name Tara Bagh, the Garden of the Star

And in the lower valley they caroused, and in the palace they caroused, and Pabu was singing three hours into the dawn

Towards the end of the month of September, Raemall spoke to Tara Devi

"I have a thing to beg of you," he said, "I think you know the thing I would beg That you should come with me to Europe"

Tara Devi was silent She cast her eyes down and looked grave At length she spoke

"This is to cross the Black Water," she said

"Even so," he agreed

"Others may cross the Black Water," she said, "but it is against religion for us of Chamunnar My father will not cross the Black Water"

"Thus I know," he replied "Yet hast thou another religion, Tara Devi I am thy husband We cannot all refuse the new times In a sense thy father must by his virtue plead with the gods for us, his brothers that cross the sea I go I must go I am thy husband It is thy place to be with me If it is a sin for thee to cross the Black Water, then I take thy sin upon me when I bid thee"

Tara Devi still looked downward She was a woman of Hindu piety, and for all her joyousness and surface waywardness, she kept her conscience herself She asked of priests their offices in great rites, but in household rites she was her own priestess, and she did not suffer their rule To her, as to all Hindu wives, her husband was lord and god yet the Rajput woman who does not leave her father's house in babyhood feels she is of that house, in a sense no more than lent to her husband

Raemall saw that she was opposing him, and not lightly either He had no share in the superstition of the Black Water It reminded him of his mother's religion Opposition to a darling project had always angered him, and now for the first time—after all this protracted bout of pleasure and intoxication of beauty and personal triumph in Delhi followed by popular triumph in his own realm—now a sudden flicker

of anger against Tara Devi, like a fork of lightning, zigzagged through his brain

"Didst thou hear?" he asked "I take thy sin on me I command thee"

His voice was level and controlled but in saying he took her sin on him, there was a touch of impatience in his tone and in his command was the accent of tyranny

Tara Devi aimed to be, and believed herself, the true Hindu wife but in point of fact she had the high spirit of her race

She now looked up, meekly put her hands together, said with no meekness whatever, "I do not go," and withdrew from him

Raemall was incensed He kept from her for two days and nights, by which time the tempestuousness of his anger—dormant this long time, for it was years since events or persons had stood against him—had subsided but he was filled with a determination that had come hard-set out of that heat

He sought an interview with her It was the first time they had been kept from one another by anything except outer circumstances, and the first time that they met not in the grace of love He stated again his expectation of her she again refused He commanded her, in a less formal tone she refused Then anger rose in him like a jostling tide of fire, and he accused her of being wanting in duty and love, unwifeliness, of impiety, of superstition, of ingratitude and from here passed on into an enumeration of all that he had given her, all the extravagances from gems to palaces It was a long list and he in his anger flung the items at her like missiles

She heard him out she was frightened well as she knew his passion, she did not know his anger Though she was frightened, she had no thought to cringe, thus indeed she would have lost his respect for ever She stood calmly, and her spirit was firm and yet shivered in her and when he had done, she spoke without a tremor

"My lord," she said, "those things were gifts you gave me of your pleasure and love I live upon my own dower I am no slave I was not bought, my father did not sell me I have not sold myself Your gifts have not bought me"

She began to leave him, and he stood battling with the fury that flashed in his eyes and prickled in his palms

She turned and was secretly appalled by the look of him

She said, in a voice that was not quite steady, "Let my lord return to me later, when he will I look for his love"

She then left him

Raemall did not go to her for a week He flung himself into a vortex of business and pleasures amounting to debauch It was bitterness and ashes to him His own arrogant imperiousness had undone him Sangram would have told him so clearly He would not tell himself clearly, and his anger was like a roaring storm All

for a woman's superstition and caprice and the ship sailing in ten days

But on an afternoon, when he lay idle in the abating heat, alone, his attendants and companions dismissed, thinking with a spent distaste of what was done and what was to come, he heard out of the blankness the voice of Tara Devi, not quite steady, "Let my lord return to me later, when he will I look for his love" It seemed to fall from the corners of the ceiling He started up and looked round he was alone In a revulsion, he found his slippers and went hastily over to the *rawala* courts

He found her asleep He stood by her She looked as she had done at sixteen, hardly changed at all His heart plunged

"Tara Devi!" he roused her "Tara Devi, Tara Devi!"

She woke

"Tara Devi," he exclaimed impetuously, "my heart, my life, my only beloved, indeed you must come, I cannot be without you If I am without you the evil things will have me I am lost without you, I cannot stay myself If you will not come, I will not go, I will not go without you The evil things caught me, but I heard your voice again, I escaped, I have come to you Take me back"

Tara Devi took him back, with a tenderness like Sitala's in his boyhood he was as a child again, for his passion was all dissipated in debauch and anger and repentance He was like a shipwrecked mariner who, after the black wild storm, regains consciousness, cast up on sunny sands, the wavelets and warmth caressing him to life

Later he whispered, "Do I stay here with thee, or dost thou come with me?"

"My lord," replied Tara Devi, "thy heart has spoken to me I come with thee"

Presently he whispered, almost inaudibly, with neither hope nor presumption, "When we leave India—not till we touch Europe—wilt thou quit the veil and go about with me?"

Tara Devi saw that he neither presumed nor hoped

"There is no resistance in me, when thou art thus my lord," she answered

On the eve of his departure, Surthawara waited upon his mother Krishna Lal Maharani in her palace He visited her at stated intervals to pay his duty, never exceeding his duty and never refusing it In all these years there was no warmth between them, for neither had repented of the quarrel and distant as the pretext was, the quarrel itself had become a solid barrier Once in a while, for form's sake, Krishna Lal summoned her daughter-in-law to her but she had no love for Tara Devi The whole match was a doom in her opinion, and having heard how it all began, she regarded Tara Devi as the source of all mischief She lived in complete retirement, devoted to her duty as a widow, with no thought beyond fasts, penances, prayers, pilgrimages, and the cult of the dead Maharajah's shrine she lived only by

rite and rote The priests and priesthoods did well out of her private purse, and if she lapsed from her duty they did better

Raemall, restored to great but chastened happiness, came to her in a mood for reconciliation, and desirous of her blessing She did not perceive the wish for reconciliation, but gave her blessing, taking the request for it as the due tribute of her position as mother Raemall was chilled

"My blessing goes with thee, my son," she said with unctuous reproach, "indeed it would go with thee, even didst thou not ask it Such is the love of a mother, that it must follow and protect even if it be set at nothing and trampled in the dust Nevertheless thou hast asked it of me, and my heart is happy" She then blessed him

Raemall was for taking his leave, but out of some perception that the occasion was kindlier than usual, as well as out of curiosity, she asked many questions, to most of which she knew the answers, having intelligence through her household He answered with some attempt at a good grace but none of this was what it might have been

Finally Krishna Lal Maharani, who knew perfectly well that her daughter-in-law was going with her son, said, "As thy mother, my son, I ask how thou hast arranged the governing of my daughter while thou art across the Black Water For though thou hast said nothing of it, it would be seemly if one roof were to cover us"

Raemall looked at her with the same displeasure with which he had looked at her when in his boyhood she had tried to finesse him

"Surely, thou knowest, O my mother, that she goes with me"

"She goes with thee! Is it true? I heard gossip of it, but I gave no credence If for no other reason, thought I, then because none of Chamunnar cross the Black Water"

"She goes with me"

"Well, well, a wife's place is with her lord nevertheless, the other is also a matter of religion I did not believe the talk There was also another talk if this is true, perhaps that is too" She stopped

"And what was that?" asked Raemall, with ominous quiet

"I do not believe it It was said that she would give up the veil"

"That is true She will give up the veil in Europe, where none are veiled"

Krishna Lal Maharani looked scandalised

"I call to mind that in the past, O my mother, you followed the counsel of the Semor Maharani and worked towards the abolishing of purdah," observed her son

"That is so it was wicked long have I seen it was wicked and I do penance for both of us each day touching the matter And it brought punishment upon me"

"What punishment?"

"I do not name it"

"What do you mean? What punishment?"

"I do not name it"

"You mean my marriage," Raemall accused her "My marriage

you call your punishment Your astrologers and priests not having contrived it, got nothing of it and arranged the stars to justify their malice in my harm ”

“My son, do not blaspheme The stars are the writing of the gods.”

“Fiddlesticks ! It angers me It is my happiness you call your punishment, because I did not take some dumb doltish chuld whom the stars ordained for me at the pleasure and profit of your priests ”

“My son, my son, the stars do not deceive It is a doom and your doom is my punishment, for I strayed out of the way of the true life Her sin is my sin Is there any blessing in this marriage ? None It has but led you into extravagance and folly——”

“Extravagance and folly ! ”

“She shoots with guns—so they tell me—she is all gems, it is thus and that, lakes and palaces Once, I remember, you told me I gave the realm to priests to spoil well, this is a different thing and more than the State can ever pay or endure ! And as for the marriage, I say again, there is no blessing on it—nay let me speak I am thy mother, and much as I pray, it is not enough, it is my duty to offer myself a victim on the altar of thy wrath I will speak —where is the blessing, I say ? Eight years and more this marriage is old, and she has brought thee no gift and no guest It was ten years before I bore thee to my lord, nor would I then have been blessed, for I had sinned already, even though it was at his wish and the senior lady’s but I won the blessing of the Lord Krishna, I endowed his temple above the city, I prayed and, lastly, in his honour I went on pilgrimage for thee and when I returned, I conceived Thus should she do, I think she has the forgiveness of the gods to win, for she bewitched you against their will, cheating you of your pre-ordained helpmeet and now she magnifies her sins by forbidden travel among the unclean, and she will bare her face to all beholders, and as her beauty is very great indeed, so therein is her sin very great indeed, and ill will come of it rather should she take advantage of your absence to put off ornaments and put on the yellow robe and pray and fast and go on a long pilgrimage and beg the forgiveness and mercy of the Lord Krishna for as he had mercy on me, so might he have mercy on her. It is no fault of yours, that no guest comes you have been wild and head-strong and disordered, but it is no fault of yours she saw you, she began it, it is all on her side Yet the god could bless her Else you must think of another one, for you must have your son I implore you, my son, lay the charge on her or give it into my hands and I will direct it, I will go with her and answer for her austerity and guard that beauty of hers from sight ”

Thus long speech roused such a blast of anger in Raemall that he shook where he stood, like a house rocked by an explosion Unerringly his mother had uncovered the wound of his quarrel with Tara Devi, and as unerringly she defined and exposed and shaped and reared before him the thing which for seven years he had not named, which had been

growing for seven years, from which for seven years he had turned his mind and his heart - he could get no child, no son from his wife

His love for his wife and her beauty and his ambition of it was the measure of his hatred of his mother - and knowing his hatred for what it was, and afraid of his own anger, he left her without a word

CHAPTER XII

1930-1931

SANGRAM AMONG THE PROPHETS

SURTHAWARA and his Maharani, with their train (the favourites Rajboland and Bikramajit of Dol remained on duty in the State together with the Diwan, Partab of Reolia), duly arrived in London at the beginning of November. In the spring they planned to tour Italy and France, returning to England for the summer racing

The first fortnight before the opening of the session was taken up with an infinity of calls, receptions, and visitings, a few of a social character, but mostly political. There were to be met friends and opponents of the political circles of Delhi, Calcutta, and Bombay, retired Englishmen who had served their thirty or forty years in India, members of the English parties (Ramsay MacDonald was then Prime Minister) - everyone was feeling his way in these preliminary contacts

The Maharajah of Jandore was one of Surthawara's chief associates. Surthawara both feared and admired the solid integrity of the older man, and Jandore found in Surthawara's brilliance a pleasing ally.

"It is fantastic," observed Surthawara one day, when they were together for a few minutes during a reception at a political hostess' house, "how little these people know of India. It exacerbates me. You know I have small sympathy for the Congress crowd - but I am inclined to agree that it is time to end the existing arrangement. This nation is not even proud of India as an appanage - it is ignorant of India - and it rules India."

"One has to admit," replied Jandore, "that it rules us by delegates who espouse our business - and even quarrel with their own country in our interest. And India shows no great aptitude for ruling herself. Look at us - we princes are the professionals of rule - and frankly we are eighteenth century and some of us mediæval, from a European point of view."

"Come come! Even Chamunnar has a railway!"

"I do not believe, for my part, that our Indian politicians will do any better than we," pursued Jandore, acknowledging the satire with a smile.

"At least," interjected the other, "they have less right to do as badly."

"And with regard to England," Jandore continued, smiling again, "whenever the Indian question becomes acute, the M P s consider it seriously enough for all to learn up the case before they sit"

"You take a rosy view of it, for on an Indian question often scarcely half the House sits at all"

Mr Macartney, now Sir Robert Macartney, joined them, and was greeted with great cordiality He was two years retired, and had with him a leading Indian Liberal, Mr Chattr Dahur

"Well, sir, so you have joined the adopted elders of India," said Surthawara to Sir Robert, adding to Mr Chattr Dahur, "I call all the British ex-officials of India the Adopted Elders of India Taken all round, they know more about our affairs than any of us Certain of them," he added, glancing at a few of the many present, "come somewhat to lack elasticity"

Sir Robert laughed Had he been one of the well-meaning but inelastic gentlemen referred to by Surthawara, he would have resented the prince's tone and called it impertinent but Sir Robert Macartney was one of the few who took men as he found them, on their merits, regardless of race and complexion

"I suppose," said Mr Chattr Dahur, who was officially representing the absent Congress party, though he could not go all the way with them, "that you have one of the most ungrateful callings in the world, the administration of a thankless country on behalf of an indifferent country" Mr Dahur spoke with gentle sarcasm

"Well," said Macartney, "it's become second nature with some of us It was more delightful, no doubt, in my father's generation, when we were all godlings and infallibles"

"I understand your son has left the Indian Army and joined the Political Service?" said Jandore

"Is that so? Your son with whom I used to play?" cried Surthawara "How jealous I was of his gun! Dear me! I made a scene when I went home"

"No, that was Michael This is my eldest son, Henry," replied Sir Robert, who had heard about the guns and remembered

"I recollect he was at school in England," rejoined Surthawara "I should like him to come to me as Resident later on that would be very pleasant"

"Meanwhile," said Mr Dahur, who was inclined to view Indian rulers and English officials as a mischievous confederacy, "we have to get India on her feet"

"That will be easy you have only to settle your religious differences," said Sir Robert, "for then we shall depart with a very good grace"

"About as easy as finding your feet in a three-legged race," commented Surthawara, more to Mr Dahur than anyone, "when all possible partners personally object to one another"

"You are cynical, Maharaja Sahib," said Mr Dahur

Surthawara twirled his moustaches and his eyes snapped

The Maharani of Surthawara bore her unveiling with an inborn grace and dignity that was the completion of her beauty. She gave an impression of high breeding and it was a surprise even to a number of people who might have known better. Except in the evenings, she wore an adaptation of her costume, her bodices, still made of Indian fabrics, being filled in to the waist and her sleeves cut long and close-fitting. So dressed, her husband did not know her—it made him laugh, but he admitted that the climate necessitated the change. London society made an event of this lovely woman in her unknown dress. She was the first Rajputni thus to come out. The Rajputs are the most conservative race and all of the warrior caste. Those women who are seen about are mostly Brahmo or Parsi or of Deccan or South Indian castes. Hence London society—as far as it was accustomed to those foreigners at all—was accustomed to see Indian women in the willowy *sari*, and Tara Devi's magnificent style was intensely admired. She was asked everywhere—wherever she went, she was quiet but full of sparkle, gently spoken but critical, remote and yet softly attentive. The women delighted in her and the men behaved as if they had seen the vision of their hearts. When she and her husband stood together, it was a sensation.

Raemall was elated to the last degree by her success. Her beauty was the complement of his—he added to her and she to him, together they were one splendid creation. Her success was as sweeping and superlative as he had anticipated. It was so great that the ghost raised by his mother sank again into the limbo of his consciousness.

The Round Table Conference proved remarkably successful and constructive. It became clear that the future constitution of India was to be based on a federation, which, considering the diversities of rule, creed, speech and character existing in the sub-continent, was the only reasonable solution. India is no less diverse than Europe. All societies—princes, Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs, Depressed Classes, women—saw in the federal scheme a chance to develop in their own way and yet cooperate over the affairs of the peninsula as a whole. All desired the parliamentary system in the separate provinces and also in the centre—the only people who demurred at the advisability of this were the fathers of Parliament themselves. Constructive and cooperative enthusiasm was the mood of the session, and after the preliminary meetings, committees were formed to investigate particular problems such as structure, finance, franchise. To a large extent the Nehru Report was followed and amplified, its omissions receiving attention. This was the first time in the history of India that representatives of all her warring elements had met face to face with an intention not of securing each his own cause but of finding agreement. The Princes no longer held aloof, secure and isolated by treaty—they were willing to federate with federated responsible Provinces. The Liberals (representing Congress in some degree) regarded the Princes as supplying a stabilizing factor. The Hindus did not resent the

independence of predominantly Moslem provinces nor counter the demand of the Depressed Classes to be considered a separate community for election purposes. It was taken for granted that women must be allowed to emerge, must be heard and considered. Everyone desired to make India fit to stand unsupported and self-responsible before the whole world.

All this spirit of good-will was in a high degree exciting and impressive.

In the van was Surthawara, not indeed a veteran like Baroda, the little man as strong as a steel coil, enlightened and redoubtable, who had been at the Durbar held for the Queen-Empress by Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, nor a proved man of valour and works like Bikaner, the burly Rathor of the desert, nor a long-tried and honest politician like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, nevertheless he was in the van, brilliant in eloquence, warm in feeling, candour and common-sense themselves in his speeches, witty in conversation, and by far the most in the public eye. He was photographed, reported, quoted, and did more to make India live for the snug fog-bound islanders than any other man of them all.

The new year was in, and the work of the conference nearing its completion. Surthawara was full of plans for a European tour with his wife. Paris, Italy and the lakes, northward again as it grew warmer, with a springtime visit to the Duc de Montchazon in Touraine, England a second time for the Derby, Oaks and Ascot, Switzerland and so to India for a month to see to his affairs before returning to England for the second session.

On a dark evening early in January, he returned from an afternoon meeting to the hotel where his following was lodged. Tara Devi was not out, but in this temporary home she had reproduced her own conditions, having a private set of rooms independent of her husband's apartments. From one of these rooms she had banished all Western furniture: a fine carpet and bolsters and cushions had been bought, and here it was India. Elsewhere however, the European style prevailed.

Surthawara let himself into his suite and proceeded to the great salon. He was preoccupied with the events of the last few hours, his mind appraising everything from two angles: how the history of India was shaping, and what figure he had cut. There was always this doubleness in his mind, very distinct, and yet he was not aware of it. He and events were not one. Events might be disastrous, but he satisfied with glory, or events might be excellent, and he bitterly vexed at a chance missed. In general, events were good or ill, but he seldom had to reproach himself with missing a chance to score. He did not analyse like this: as far as he was aware, it was all emotion and mood. To-day had gone well, and he was still recollecting with pleasure the fine speech he had made yesterday, one of the perorational speeches of the session. Inspiration had truly come to him: he had

spoken with immense feeling, his eloquence scattered with a diamond-dust of satire and wit his theme the aspirations and practical efforts of India in her own behalf, and the necessity of parting gently, not too fast, and in decent order with British tutelage he admonished his own country to reform those habits and customs which prevented her from standing among free and civilized peoples, and to honour with gratitude a connection which often galled but had never betrayed. The effect upon his audience had been intense they had caught his fire it was like the grandiose intoxication of music. The press raised a fanfare over the speech. It had been his master-effort and it was hailed as the star speech of the session. He was the object of endless congratulation he was thanked for his sincerity he had quickened belief and hope. The repercussions were infinite. Full of fine dreams, his mind roamed in a spacious golden future, resolving the great problems he was under his own prophetic spell.

Thus entranced, he entered his long reception-room, and had walked down it towards the open fire before he saw that a man was standing by a lamp beyond the fire.

He stood stock still. It was his brother Sangram.

So for a long minute.

He then came on slowly, not at all sure how he felt in the face of this resurrection. He recognised the moment the Rajput code has its provision for reconciliation face to face. His heart began to beat. He did not speak.

"You banished me," said Sangram at last, "take me back, O my elder brother."

Raemall did not reply at once.

"Where have you been all these years?" he finally demanded.

"In France in Italy."

"Had you so little desire for your own land?"

"I had a great desire for it but to be in India is to be known and noted it was better for our credit if I lived privately in Europe, seeing I could not come to Surthawara."

Raemall had long put the thought of his brother from him, but when the thought of him would not be put away, he had never imagined his motive for living in Europe to be anything but a predilection for Europe and anger against himself. At the sight of him, the hardness he had laid over his heart toward Sangram began to crack and break.

"Recall me, Maharaj," said Sangram, and again, "take me back, Raemall."

Raemall's heart turned over, as it had done years ago clouds seemed to roll away, and he knew he was delighted. He laughed and held out both his hands.

"Sanga, Sanga, little brother," he exclaimed, "it is over, thou art returned."

In the generous emotion of the Rajput, he wiped out the past, standing before the fire with his arm round his brother's shoulders.

"Well," he said, "so you are a citizen of Europe—how do you think of Europe?"

"It is amusing to visit," replied Sangram, "but I have been in the desert."

"I did not know I was committing thee to a desert," said Raemall. "Is it forgiven?"

Sangram smiled at him, there was a touch of sadness in his eyes, but Raemall did not realise it.

They sat down together on a sofa.

"You have become a great man, brother," said Sangram, taking to English. "I have been in London all through the Conference. Our father would have been proud of you. I have followed all your career, out there and now here—and have myself heard most of your speeches."

"Did you hear me speak yesterday?"

"I did—that was your greatest speech. You not only made a great speech, you added then to English letters, Raemall!"

"How is it," said Raemall, as ever most pleased by Sangram's praise, "that you have been in London all the time and I never heard of it or met you?"

"I scarcely go about," replied Sangram.

"What do you mean, Sanga? Is your portion not enough? Tell me what you need. I will appoint it——"

"My portion is more than enough. I live quietly."

Raemall sat back a little and looked at his brother curiously.

"You are a strange man," he said, "you have the valour of our race—but—but—what is it? All those years in Europe, have you been living with your *guru* in the banyan grove?"

Sangram laughed, and turned the talk to other things, drawing out his brother on the subject of his career, his doings, the general course of affairs—and found that all was as it had been. Raemall had not changed—danger was inherent in him. Sangram felt immeasurably the older man, and found his affection for his brother rekindling with a peculiar quality in it, a sort of knowledge, or understanding, a refusal to pass judgment, a tenderness against all reason. In some such way do women love their children.

Presently Raemall rose.

"Let us go to see her," he said, "that is someone else who will be glad to see you. Sometimes she has asked for news of you. I have made up some pretty scurvy answers."

He looked extraordinarily handsome in this mood. Sangram gazed at his brother in fascinated admiration, silent, he had half forgotten the effect of his barbaric and virile beauty.

"Well!" exclaimed Raemall, challenging him.

"God be praised for beauty," thought Sangram, disturbed, "it touches the soul." Aloud he said, "Take me to her."

Raemall could half interpret what Sangram had withheld from words.

"You have grown strange in your desert, Sanga—but you have not my permission to become a mystic or a recluse. Come along."

He took Sangram's arm, and at the touch, exclaimed impulsively, in the dialect of Surthawara, "Thou art more than any of these; I did not know it, I thought I had done with thee, Sanga, son of my father, little brother"

The second session of the Round Table Conference was due to take place in September. This was early but Raemall did not give up his intention of a racing summer in England. There would still be time for a brief visit to Surthawara in August. Now they set out for Italy.

The five or six months that followed were perhaps the happiest that the three ever knew. All was to be had at will, and ruin had not yet lifted her haggard head. For Raemall, in the past, there had again and again been the ecstasy of triumph. For Tara Devi there had been many a rapture, but this was different. It was a kind of sweet tranquillity, an all-pervading harmony which lent a numbus to the simplest spectacle or the most silent and inactive moment, while heightening the glory of any beautiful thing they saw or heard together.

Raemall seemed entirely to have forgotten the pretext on which he had banished his brother. He had indeed never seriously suspected the nature of Sangram's affection for Tara Devi. In the fantasy of rage the thing had momentarily assumed this monstrous shape, and he had been enraged because Sangram had laid naked his capital fault. If Sangram's reproach had been unjust, Raemall would not have exhibited such resentment, a resentment rendered savage because he refused to see his fault, but knew it nevertheless.

By degrees the life Sangram had led in all those years of exile was defined. He had spent three years in the cavalry schools of Saumur, where his defect of sight was overlooked in view of his accomplishment. The next three years he had spent in travel all over Europe and in going round the world, and after this he had proceeded to settle down in a small house in Sicily, at intervals travelling in Europe and Persia. He had revisited India, as a private individual, three times, for a month or so. In Sicily he had with him a Brahman cook and his wife, a personal servant and his wife, and for a companion here and on his travels he had had Kashinath the Jain's son. Kashinath's father had died late in 1929 and since then he had been alone.

They visited the Sicilian villa, situated high above a wide, craggy bay. It just housed the three of them, the servants and others were accommodated outside. They were travelling by road while in England, Raemall had bought two Rolls-Royces. The balance of attendants moved by rail. Raemall had sent home most of his suite, and was travelling in considerable simplicity with a staff of eight servants and two gentlemen. And this absence of formality proved as pleasant as it was strange to himself and Tara Devi.

"I admit," said Raemall to his brother, as they stood in the fresh evening watching the purple night sweep into the bay, the sunset fled, the stars coming out, and a faint eastward glimmer promising the

moon, "I admit that your hermit-life has its compensations. And in your case you have vented your energy by a hard season's climbing every year in Switzerland and the Dolomites, and your hunting seasons in England and Ireland. Still—" In Paris and London Sangram had shown no interest in, and a total ignorance of, the aphrodisiac life. Moreover he had never taken his bride—and it is a sin on the part of those responsible to let a woman come to age unconsummated. In his position as heir to the throne of Surthawara, Sangram was not at liberty to retire into a brotherhood. If Raemall had a son, would his brother actually join a monastery of ascetics? Was he indeed so strange a man? The whole question turned upon the son he had not, and rather than entertain this thought, Raemall abandoned the attempt to find out the truth of the most curious thing in his brother.

"It is chilly," he said. They went in.

Nevertheless, Raemall came back to this matter—he was obliged to do so, whether he liked it or not. Approaching this time with more honesty, he met with a curious result, not at all to be expected.

They were again standing on the terrace above the wide bay, leaning on the wall—it was early in the day, the sun streamed over the tawny and silver limestone of the craggy hill, tufted with scrub-oak and grey bushes—the translucent aquamarine, idly breaking white upon the reefs, hemmed in by the shining horseshoe of cliff and rock, swept out to join the sky. The morning was a pæan.

Raemall turned and stared into the sunlight—it beat on his face, and his face took only beauty from the sun.

"It is almost like home," he said, "even the oleanders—this sea gives off a light like the desert—how strange to think that we are in the same latitude, or very nearly."

He turned to his brother. Sangram was not beautiful—in height he was only just less tall than his brother, but being of a heavier build, he looked shorter. In face he was comely. Raemall, inspecting him, saw that it was not features that made his looks, but the character of his expression—considerateness, reflectiveness, determination. Raemall suddenly saw that his own manners were the fine manners of a proud and high-bred man—but Sangram's manners were also the expression of a courteous nature. An impulse of affection, bound up with an unpleasant prod of conscience, made him speak straightly with his brother.

"Sangram," he said, with stiffness, "there is a serious thing that cannot be put off for ever—since we have come together again, I must speak of it. Hitherto I have—set it aside. You are thirty years of age. The Rao of Parbatsar is becoming angry, that you have not taken his daughter to wife. It is not a modern family—she is old, twenty-one or two."

Sangram flushed up and moved uneasily—he did not reply.

"I have given various answers," Raemall went on, "that your mother

being dead, she could not be taken into your household earlier, that my mother had surrendered your education and guidance to the Raj and that the Raj discountenanced early marriage, that you were studying religion and philosophy, that you were living as an ascetic, that you were going round the world, that I did not know where you were, that you would no doubt take her in your good time I will admit that I that I have been at no pains to put the matter right Nevertheless it is a sin of damnation, and in another time there would have been swords out over it Hereafter you will have to answer for yourself"

Raemall did not mention the fatal question of an heir this was as much as his jealousy and pride would allow him to say

Sangram made no immediate reply It was clear that the question touched him in the quick

"I cannot do it," he said roughly "Not yet I am not ready When I am ready either I will marry her or join a brotherhood I am not ready"

Raemall laughed drily

"There are other things to be considered," he said, "besides the making of your own soul However, you can see for yourself and you know the tenets of our religion as well as I It is your sin and your salvation I do not press you"

Sangram made no answer, but turned and looked out to sea Gradually his evident trouble subsided, and gradually Raemall also put a distance between him and the jealous question of his heirlessness Affection returned, and with it curiosity Sangram had accounted for his physical wanderings in time and space, but what did he mean by "I am not ready?" Raemall knew that his brother could sit on a stone and put a girdle round the earth but what was "I am not ready?" He had grown, in other ways than physically His view was always a touchstone and often of practical value

Sangram was withdrawn, fixing the farthest glistening promontory

"What is it you see out there, Sangaji?" asked Raemall

Sangram turned and looked at him and Raemall saw that he was going to be answered

"A strange thing," he said, "a strange thing and you will call me a fool, but I will tell you I have been reading and looking the reading is all in my library in the house, but for the looking I would have to take you across Persia and the Caucasus and through Macedonia and Dalmatia and the Dolomites and Tirol, along the northern Alps, Swabia and Saxony and across Normandy and Flanders and Denmark and Norway And then England and Scotland and Ireland And then along the Atlas mountains and up Palestine But the tan varies with the sun"

He turned away and looked at the far promontory

"I don't follow," said Raemall

"No," said Sangram "But all along that line you find men like us, the Jat Rajputs, the Jats, and the Punjabis and Pathans Perhaps they are the old bowmen on horseback, who wore leggings or kilts or

shorts in the mountains like us and the hill-Greeks and the Scots you know them the minute you see them, tall chaps with long heads and bony faces and deep-set eyes. Wherever they go, it is wars and clans and independence and loyalties and feuds and ferment. It is trade, acquisition, rule and dominion, never a static life, deeds rather than arts. The old Greeks called the Macedonian horsemen barbarians, and Alexander came conquering all the way to the Indus, and met the earlier of us who had preceded him, and many more came after. I don't know who we are. I don't know where we came from when we struck the Caucasus and the Persian mountains, some went west and forced the Danube and the Alps and the Channel, and some went east and forced the Khyber, and some south to Palestine, and long after us came Huns and Turks. but I think our people left pockets behind everywhere, in Macedonia and Tirol and Swabia and Spain, and the other branch in Persia and Palestine and the Hindu Kush. No other race has held itself more apart or made more wars unless it was the Hebrews, who fought all comers and one another. And our kings were Philip of Macedon and the Parthians and Charlemagne and the Hohenstaufen and the Kings of England and the Norman kings of Sicily and the late Satraps of Persia and the north-western kings of Hindustan. There was another race of kings, the Turks. at one time they sat on the Ottoman throne, the throne of Persia, the throne of the Moguls, and the throne of the Manchus. that was their peak, and that wave has ebbed out. but we sit on our thrones still, and the English sit on theirs. the ancient thrones of the world."

"Sanga, this is a preposterous rigmarole."

"I said you would call me a fool! But in one period, from Edinburgh to Lucknow, we built our castles, and they are the same castles, east and west. and in one period the bowmen of England and the bowmen of the Indus were in regiments. and in one period we forged helmets and chain mail from England to India—do you remember the portrait of Partab Singh on his armoured horse. and the suit of mail you wear at the Dasehra?—and of those suits, the Persian was the finest mail and damascening, as the Normans found out in Palestine. At their end they have taken on no colour in the sunless sea-mists though we at our end have done so from the sun. but all the way from India to England, while we cannot talk together, we know one another. we are kindred."

"What you are saying, Sanga, is fantastic. and it is absolute heresy."

"I know," replied Sangram, "but I think we have gone after false gods. The gods of their paganism are the very gods of ours. Gauri, Nerthus, Pharro, Frey, Frija, Holle, Holi, Hara and the rest. Yet we Rajputs have in fact only one supreme divinity and we call him Siva, the God of Destruction, though the women have others. but he alone is Mahadeo. The Sikhs have only one god, the Spirit. The Punjabis and Pathans and all of them have only one god, and they call him Allah. The Persians call him Allah, too, but once they saw him in the sun and fire. In north-western Europe they have only one

god, though everywhere as with us the priests and women have others; and they call him God. All of us have that name in common, *Ghuda*. I think it is the truth that the people who know God, whatever He is, for One, and for their Ruler, are for the most part we people who recognise each other on sight."

"You are simply saying, Sangram, that white men are white men even when they are brown."

"No. Not these Sicilians. Not Iberians or the dark Latins or Celts but the fair Gauls, yes. Not all Greeks. Not Balts. Not Magyars. Not Turks. Not Egyptians. Not all Jews. None of those are us, no more than the other nine-tenths of Indians. Only the Arabs are bred through and through all of us. The others are all foreign—if not as alien as the Chinese or the Negroes."

Raemall stood staring at his brother as if he had taken leave of his senses. Sangram had spoken looking sometimes at him and sometimes at the far headland, but all the time he had been describing another thing he saw, a shimmer of many lands from the mouths of the Ganges to the estuary of the Thames, a surge of peoples back and fore, sweeping to the left and right, a sliding away of centuries, and everywhere a certain unmistakable character and likeness of men.

He glanced at his brother.

"There are other coincidences," he said. "Did you know that the Anglo-Saxons had caste when they invaded Britain? But they killed and absorbed the inhabitants, and behind their barrier of sea, they could afford to relax it—we in the face of more foreign people than we could destroy, forged caste itself into a barrier. And little things. Why do they and we preserve maypoles? Why is our dress and diet like theirs but different from the rest of India? And villages and houses? Did you know that before they became Christian, they burned their dead as we do, as our Moslems did? Why do we share the feudal system with them? Why do they play the zither and the cithara, those peoples, and we the *chahtara*, and the English have the harp among the Royal Arms? Why are their sagas and ballads the brothers of our epics, even the measure is the same—what is there to choose between Roland and Kanau? Who else has had the battle-maidens? It is the same people singing east and west. Read their *I roissart*—it is the chronicle of our own chivalry in the same period—it is the same code, it is *noblesse oblige*, east and west. I do not say we have not both failed the code of chivalry! Or why do all we of the north-west call ourselves Singh, the Lion? Why do the English affect a lion? The throne of Abyssinia and the throne of Persia are under the emblem of the Lion—but what have the English or we to do with lions? There were never lions in England or Scotland and in India the tiger is king, the lion's a poor brute. We must have met the lion together long ago, in the days when Persia and Palestine could supply Pompey with six hundred lions for a single circus—and they set up the Lion with the Unicorn, and we call ourselves Lion and worship the horse."

Raemall looked more than perplexed—he was concerned

"This sounds madness to me," he said, "and yet—yet—there is something . . . You should not sit under your banyan-tree so much, Sanga—you are becoming a visionary"

"A visionary?" said Sangram. "In that case the ethnological experts are visionaries with me. History herself is a visionary. Any-one who sees a plain fact before others come to see it is called a visionary. I see pockets and peoples and classes of our people all across mid-Asia and Europe and in the Atlas, and I see them forty million strong in England and the clans of Scotland, tempering Europe. I see fifty millions of them in North America among America's hundred millions. I see nine and ten and eight millions in Africa and Canada and Australia and New Zealand. I see our clans twenty-five or thirty million strong in the north and west of India, and many more in the Hindu Kush, raiding caravans and sniping one another down, hidden away in the Karakoram, and we here hold rule among four hundred millions. Half of Iran herself is us. All we are so posted, that we hold the world, and one day we shall know one another again. Oh yes, a hundred and fifty years hence the ethnologists will correct the histories, and will write that the English have been pent in the Hindu Kush and ruled in India for the last two thousand and three hundred years, and rule to-day on the thrones of the Chambal. Or that we Jats and Rajputs are the men that broke the Armada and manned the *Mayflower* and the *Golden Hind* and fought at Minden with roses in our caps. I cannot leave it alone. I must find it out—find it all out—find it out"

"Find what out? My dear fellow—in Heaven's name, find what out?"

"I don't know. Find out when and where we were one people—when and where we found the same gods, and God, and were set in the same shape of society and took to the same sports and bred the same character and type. You may think it's a usual combination of characteristics. I assure you it's not. It's a recognised riddle, this riddle. It has an answer. There is an answer, and I believe it's the key to the future. It's buried under ruins, and in the rubble of customs, and in ancient annals, and the observations of pedagogues and scholars—it's written up before the world in standing monuments and common traditions and in living flesh. That's what I must find out—where we were together, and when, and who we were. And that—that will be the beginning"

"The beginning of what?" asked Raemall blankly

"I do not know," replied Sangram. "I do not know," he repeated, and laughed, and his face too took only beauty from the sun

From Sicily they wended north again, visiting all the famous towns of Italy. Convinced as he was of the superiority of his country and race over every other, Raemall was increasingly impressed by the massive and lovely monuments of Roman and Renaissance Italy, the

careful husbandry of fruit and corn and wine and oil His feelings varied between a disdain rooted in jealousy and delight springing from a love of beauty ceaselessly he compared and disparaged

In one particular he could claim a beautiful thing unsurpassed In every gallery he looked at the portraits of all lovely women, princesses, nymphs, goddesses or madonnas, with the sole view of comparing them to Tara Devi and they lost in the comparison, being each and all, the most famous and the most admired, coarse, or dull, or stupid, or lascivious, or unburgeoned, or mature, or pretentious, when set up beside her The favourite beauty of da Vinci alone had something of the nature of her sweetness, and Boticelli's nymphs her freshness In the first and only gallery to which she went, Tara Devi was mortified by these evident comparisons to her person, as well as scandalised by the scenes of naked passion, and she refused to go to any other gallery of pictures

She also found the undisguised admiration exhibited by Italians for a beautiful woman extremely embarrassing She had found Englishmen willing to keep their distance in common with their kindred in India, they were respecters of women The French had courted her, and she had not liked it but they observed the Western convention of manners The Italians were frankly excited she was affronted, and practically resumed her seclusion

"Understand this," said she, "either you or Sangram must remain at my side, at my side on all occasions"

Raemall and Sangram obeyed her

She had spoken gently, and with great civility, but with decision Sangram wondered to what extent he was right in conjecturing a criticism of Raemall in her, and a mistrust of the reasons for her emancipation

Then as the spring went north, they followed, and in May were in Touraine There were still late primroses in the thickets, the wistaria bloomed on walls like a tapestry, the judas tree flowered crimson in the woods, and in the court of the Château de Montchazon a mighty Paulownia was covered from top to bottom with periwinkle blue

Of all the châteaux of Touraine, Montchazon is perhaps the epitome It rises on a limestone cliff above the Loire, built of white stone, the true French château crenellated, with pointed roofs grey-slatted topping its thick round towers and turrets landwards two great bastions enfilade the spiked door Through the portcullis is seen the first of three great courts, containing a well with a wrought-iron hood in the second is a chestnut tree, the first to be brought from Persia, planted by Francis I, and in the last now flowered the Paulownia The rooms are full of ancient and lovely things and all is thick with the patina of decayed splendour and old intrigue this was the chapel of Marie de Medicis, here her astrologer-priest had his secret room, in this wing a king's mistress was in hiding, here a famous man was murdered and another born

Even as the Duc de Montchazon had felt at home in Rajputana, Surthawara felt at home here

The Duc de Montchazon made his guests royally welcome. He presented his son, a young unmarried man, still at the stage of opera-beauties and elegances, but already with a certain rigid distinction. The Duchesse was many years dead. The week of the visit went like a week in the time of Louis XIV. The Duc kept his own staghounds and a fine stable. His motor-cars were less extravagant, but he took his guests to call at various houses whose original owners still were in residence, and when it came to their visiting the châteaux which are open to the traveller, he gave them into the charge of his majordomo, being too proud to go himself to see what has become the property of the Republic or this or that rich manufacturer. As Sangram knew the whole neighbourhood well, Raemall and Tara Devi saw what they should and did not suffer from their host's inability to distinguish between past and present, the real and the vanished.

Surthawara was delighted with what he saw. He recognised in the French style one of the finished articles of civilisation. Especially Chambord and Chaumont excited him, and on the day that he lastly saw Azay-le-Rideau, he exclaimed, "It was enchanting! a little jewel!" The next time you come to India, sir, I will accommodate you in the style to which you are accustomed. My palace at Jalankar is still short of a wing. Well, it shall have a wing for Europeans, and a double stair that never meets, like the stair of Chambord, and I will call it Petit Azay—or *le Montchazon oriental*, with your permission."

"You flatter me," rejoined the Frenchman, "it is a compliment to the genius of France and to her true self."

"Will not Jalankar look peculiar with a French wing?" demurred Sangram.

"Peculiar! Certainly capricious," agreed his brother laughing, "but is Jalankar a serious thing? Once it was called a toy, I seem to think."

"Palaces," observed the Duc, "are the toys of kings."

"And your Noah's Ark, I suppose," said Raemall, "of God?"

At the end of the visit, the Duc gave a great dinner-party. The table in the long tapestried banquetting hall resumed a glory it had scarcely seen for three generations. It was immaculate with damask, glittering with historic plate, full of flowers, gleaming under crystal chandeliers. The host sat at the head and the long perspective stretched before him. Forty couples and the names in the filigree card-holders read like the executioners' lists in 1789. There they sat, the bluest blood in France, old and young, the distinguished and the absurd, wits and dullards, swordsmen and cripples, thinkers and idlers, keen and torpid, laymen and prelates, beauties and great ladies and old hens. These were the descendants of those who had ruled like petty kings in their provinces, or considered themselves honoured to sleep in a footman's closet, bringing the king his cravat at his levee. Here they entertained one another with well-trained talk and edified

one another with mutual esteem in race, breeding, age, outlook, civilisation, occupation, they were strangely homogeneous, but for one alien streak if you considered the guests at table, here and there you saw a woman who had not the look of the others, who was out of the talk, or whose ease and disunction were overdone, who spoke imperfectly and was not among her kind. These were the rich American wives, married for their money by men whose allegiance was to pedigree. Except for these they were the exiles of time, self-dishherited, men and women who believed in a divinity that was dead, a dynasty that was gone, ways of life that were swept into the void, in lilies that were dust.

Here, too, Raemall, at the formal reception, had had his triumph for the society which had called its kings *le Bel, le Glorieux, le Roi Soleil*, whose beauties were Diane de Poitiers, la Vallière, la Pompadour, Marie Antoinette, du Barry—rose to salute his royalty, and could not find terms to salute the loveliness of his wife.

Course followed course, the silver plate shone, the few but storied dishes of gold appeared, the old glass sparkled, the wines glowed, amber and red—it was all a fume of rich food and flowers and perfumes.

Talk fluttered after talk into the darkness of the past.

They are phantoms, thought Sangram, looking up and down the long ceremonious table—phantoms with eyes turned backward in their heads.

Then he saw that Surthawara was indeed a king among these phantoms.

This interlude was also over and now it was the end of May they were bound for England and the great classics of horseflesh, the Derby, the Oaks, Ascot and Goodwood, Hurlingham and Ranelagh.

This was a different thing from ruined cities and ruined societies this was the horse, hot, heaving, reeking, furious and tractable, alive this was man and beast and the thundering turf, the first half-savage Scythian invader that swept down upon Greece in the West and the plains of Hind in the East.

"Look," cried Raemall, as the sea-breeze tore at Tara Devi's head-scarf, "down there on the quay do you see anyone we know?"

The channel-steamer warped in. Tara Devi, having seen, returned into their private saloon.

On the quay was Bikramajit of Dol and with him Rajboland

CHAPTER XIII

1931

KRISHNA LAL'S REASONING

RAEMALL, first ashore with one of his gentlemen, greeted his two favourites with extreme pleasure. They, fresh from their State, paid him the deference and obeisance due to an Eastern sovereign, and after five months in Europe, it came as a slight but agreeable shock to their prince.

"Come, come," he said in English, "we are in England, my dear fellows! When in Rome, do as Rome does. Well, now for our great enterprise, eh? Here's my brother."

Sangram came up with Tara Devi and the other gentleman. Tara Devi was doing a thing she had not done for months: she had insensibly drawn her scarf across her face, with the immemorial gesture of the Indian woman. As she bowed to the newcomers, she caught her husband's eye, realised the action, and let down her scarf.

Bikramajit, seeing her again, smiled as he would have smiled at his wife or one of his children.

Rajboland, seeing her for the first time, was transfixed and coming to himself, diverted his glance. But thereafter, in addition to his habitual arrogant swagger, whenever in her presence he unconsciously ruffled like an eagle in display.

Once back in England, the simplicity of their travel fled from them like a broken spell.

Surthawara took up his English acquaintances again, people of high birth, men of wealth and eminence. Whatever their standard, he had to excel it. His lineage was older than any in Europe except the King's. In eminence, thanks to his recent political exploits, he was the match of anyone. In wealth he was surpassed, but not in the marks of wealth. His liberality was great, the state he kept up resplendent, his extravagance and generosity boundless.

The Derby came. Together they all went down to the country. The crowds were vast, though not vast as crowds go in India, where a third-class pilgrimage can double the Derby. The two Rajput princes and the four Rajput gentlemen appraised the horses with the keenness of connoisseurs. And Tara Devi, equally a vessel of the genius of her race, forgot herself entirely in the glory of the beasts. Surthawara, Rajboland, and Dol confabulated endlessly and eagerly over their programmes, marking certain entries, conferring with owners and through their connections and their great horse-lore they were accepted into the inner circle, with the result that the days before the Oaks and after the Oaks and before Ascot and after Ascot were taken up with flying calls at country stables.

Raemall and Rajboland, relying largely on the uncanny flair of

Bikramajit, betted heavily and won fantastic sums. **Bikramajit** himself was not so much interested in this side of it, though he staked on everything. **Sangram's** pecuniary adventures were less spectacular than his brother's or the favourite's, but still considerable. **Tara Devi**, once she understood the game, eagerly played her own hand, sometimes following **Bikramajit**, sometimes forming her own opinion independently. The gaming instincts of the Rajput, who will wager house and hold, were rampant. They all were in a sort of intoxication, not only for the sake of the hazard, but for the sake of the horses. The talk was all horse—pedigree, points, beauty, speed.

The day before Ascot, **Racmall** said to **Tara Devi**, "Look out of the window."

Tara Devi looked out, and her husband and brother-in-law looked over her shoulders.

In the court of the hotel, drawn up in full view at the opposite pavement, stood a superb limousine, black, long, upholstered in primrose damask, the emblem of **Surthawara** raised in gold on the doors.

"That is your own private car," said **Racmall**, "I had it designed for you before we left London."

Tara Devi was delighted. They all went over to look at it, like children examining the gold fittings and cut crystal vases and the silk cords and gadgets and dodges, while the Sikh driver, who had come over with **Rajboland**, showed off the beauties and pointed out one or two trifles they overlooked. The original de luxe model had been lined with kid—it had been **Sangram** who had reminded **Racmall** that kid would be unacceptable to **Tara Devi's** orthodoxy.

"You shall learn to drive it," said **Racmall**.

"How fast will it go?" enquired **Tara Devi**, sparkling.

"It can do a hundred miles an hour," he replied with a smile.

"Then I will drive it at a hundred miles an hour," laughed **Tara Devi**, clapping her soft crimson palms together, "we must go back by those new roads in Germany. Now teach me! Now teach me! My first little lesson! At once!"

Racmall laughed too, in admiration and indulgence. And **Rajboland**, keeping a proper distance, discreetly stared at her, swaggering.

Ascot was brilliant that year, and the most brilliant party in the show was the small party from **Surthawara**. It was not only the splendour of their persons that marked them, but their mental exaltation. **Racmall**, **Rajboland** and **Bikramajit** had negotiations on hand for two stallions and a mare. If they did well in these races, it would put up the already immense prices, but would show their style beyond a doubt. **Bikramajit** predicted that "One Way" and "Folly" would produce the best racing strain in India, and by **Lord Manchart's** "Pendred" out of **Surthawara's** filly "Manika" (his second of this name) he confidently foretold one of the finest horses in the world.

They therefore watched the events with an intense excitement.

which united them absolutely and marked them apart - and for once Raemall was careless of the cameras and the comments

Then Ascot was over, and Goodwood was over. the horses were bought, One Way and Folly and Pendred were all booked for India, Bikramajit staying behind with two of his master's gentlemen to go surety for his assertion that all three would stand the journey well and flourish in the East

Surthawara, with his wife, his brother, and Rajboland, crossed to France to indulge Tara Devi's desire to drive her damask-lined car at a hundred miles an hour on the roads of Germany, where this can be done - and she did it

"Surely," said Raemall, "you are the first woman in India to learn to drive a car in under two months, and then to drive it at a hundred miles an hour"

Tara Devi laughed, her small teeth like pomegranate seeds

They proceeded to Genoa, where they took ship for Bombay in the fastest and most luxurious vessel on the India route, the *Victoria* now at the bottom of the Mediterranean. Sangram asked permission to leave them at Naples, coming on later by another line - he wished to wind up his affairs in Sicily

"By all means," agreed Raemall, "do as you like" Then he glanced sideways at his brother, and added, "So there was a woman all the time, little recluse?"

"There is no woman," replied Sangram - it was not a subject they could pursue together

They came into Naples in the morning. Sitting aloft on the officers' fore-deck (for Surthawara had made certain arrangements with the captain for the sake of privacy), Tara Devi watched the city approach, its castle, its walls and cliffs, its houses climbing a crag - and at the prospect, her heart sank with a nameless apprehension

Rajboland came and stood beside her

"How lucky Prahar and Maldan were," he said, "to have accompanied your Highnesses throughout that trip. They never stopped talking of what they had seen"

He ceased looking at the approaching city, and his bold hawkish gaze turned upon the princess

"Yet all Europe cannot match the glory of the State of Surthawara," he added - and though his words and manner were inoffensive, Tara Devi did not care for it, and went back to her saloon

They went ashore - they went to Pompeii - they returned to the ship, and Sangram went up with them, till the bells rang to clear visitors

He saluted his brother and his brother's wife and Rajboland and at the foot of the gangway turned, raising his hand before walking away. They were all three leaning on the taffrail, not far above the quay. Tara Devi's eyes were fixed on him, her lips were parted, she was not breathing - and as he looked up at her, he saw the lips make the soundless syllables, "Sangram" - Then she blotted it all out with the

smile that was like the sun on the lake of Karandola, glanced up at her husband, they waved, and turned back into the ship.

Sangram could not forget what he had seen. He was sure she had made the shape of his name. Her eyes had been like a cry for help. He was profoundly disquieted.

He did not know what exactly he feared. It was not the dangerous seam in his brother's character—he had known that all his life. This was some development he did not yet foresee. Now that he was out of their company, free of the binding of his brother's brilliant charm and his wife's fascination, his mind began to range over all that had happened in the last six or seven months, to sift it out, to sort it into kinds—and the final account disquieted him even more deeply.

In the beginning there had been those speeches—but nothing that Raemall had ever said in domestic conversation bore out his line of political argument. Yet he was not insincere. There were the extravagances—the lavish hospitality and entertainments continually offered to guests—the three costly cars, and Tara Devi's, and, Sangram believed, a similar one in purple damask being shipped for Raemall's mother—Tara Devi's six fur coats, all the jewels he had bought her, the oddments like diamond-handed clocks that told the date with the moon's quarter in onyx and platinum—the furniture and bolts of fabric ordered in Paris and London for Jalankar and other objects—the electric fittings, hand-wrought, hand-carved, in woods and metals and stones of intrinsic value, which had fascinated his brother—and finally the three horses that were to come out with the cold weather, the exceedingly expensive racing stallions and the filly, One Way, Pendred, and Folly.

The more Sangram considered the probable total of these items, the more he saw that they were out of all proportion to the revenue or treasure of Surthawara.

Nearing Bombay, Raemall also began to emerge from his European dream, and to inform himself more seriously of doings in India and doings in his own State. In March of that year—how long ago March seemed! they had then been in Sicily, or was it Rome?—the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, had come to an understanding with the Mahatma, who agreed to suspend his peaceable hostilities. Now, it appeared, Congress was consenting to patronise the Second Round Table Conference.

"I suppose they have detected the fact that if they don't get on the train, it will go on without them," Raemall observed to Rajboland. "And I have no doubt that once on board they will aim at driving the engine."

"A new capacity for the holy one, Maharaj."

"As you say, a new capacity for the Mahatma. And if he cannot drive the train off across country into the rocks and jungle, I've no doubt he will include a little dynamite in the coal, or if he does not feel so spectacular and self-sacrificial, he will simply pour sand into the bearings and the boiler."

“ You do not properly revere the holy one, Maharaj ”

“ I suspect him of being a power politician, an egoist whose supreme pride is his much-advertised humbleness —At any rate,” concluded Raemall very drily, “ he is not completely in the tradition of holiness ”

Rajboland laughed, not at all of a sycophant’s laugh. Though he did not dare presume on his position, he was perfectly confident in it, and too great a vassal to entertain any doubts as to his standing. He was no more made for sycophancy than his master would endure a sycophant.

Raemall’s mind was straying towards India’s religious aberrations, beside which Europe’s are tame and towards that truer teacher, Raghudeva Rao, the Jain who tended the shrine of Ganesha in the banyan grove. India was full of false wisdom and false prophets and superstitions but she also had a great tradition of the quiet wise ones who after much reflection came to teach, and knew that no house can be built except stone by good stone, and no society except man by good man.

Raghudeva Rao would be sitting up there now, thinking or talking.

“ I shall have my work cut out if I am to review the State’s affairs in six weeks,” observed Raemall. “ September the seventh is very early to open the Conference. I should have flown home as well as flying to England in September ”

“ At least you will find everything in excellent order,” replied Rajboland.

“ What do you mean ? ” asked Raemall, catching in the tone something not in the words.

“ I mean ? Nothing, Maharaj ”

“ Yes ? Speak out, Rajboland, why are you not plain ? Have you kept something back from me all these weeks ? ”

“ You misunderstand me, Maharaj. I have kept nothing back. I am saying nothing. You will find everything in excellent order, as I say, your administration is in excellent hands. You will find Reolia has husbanded your resources in a way that even your honoured father the late Maharajah, may his soul rest, would have found worthy of praise ”

Surthawara glanced shrewdly at his friend. Rajboland meant something else and his master bore in mind that he was of the family whose hereditary honour has been the holding of the office of Diwan.

“ Has Reolia cut down the stable allowances ? ”

“ Certainly he suggested some economies with the elephant stables and kennels as much as with the horses ”

Again Surthawara tried to assess his man. Was he merely touched in his own offices, or was there something else ?

“ Has he gone in any way beyond his powers ? ” he demanded sharply.

“ I understand that his powers are unlimited,” replied Rajboland.

His master investigated no further, but turned gracefully out of the topic. nevertheless, speculation grew in his mind till, by the time they

docked in Bombay a day later, it had reached the extreme of impatience and the anticipation of affront

Tara Devi was feeling a change in Raemall's temper which had begun with the coming of Hamur of Rajboland and had increased ever since. The tranquillity he had temporarily acquired on the Italian trip had quite evaporated nor was he in the simpler mood of last winter, when he entered the race for political glory as an athlete enters the race for his laurels. Rajboland was astute, ostentatious, grasping, generous, dissolute, amusing, a magnificent horseman, a very hard liver in every department of his life. Where he matched his master, it was among these characteristics. In times of war, they would have made their mark together in honour and glory. But there were no wars for Rajputs just now the pair were like empty mill-stones grinding for destruction. As a woman, Tara Devi feared and resented the boldness of her husband's favourite as a wife, she feared for her husband. She knew well enough that no man or woman could dominate Surthawara but it would do him no good if his worse qualities were reinforced. And considering Rajboland whom not loving she saw clearly, Tara Devi was being led to see her husband also and what she saw made her begin to be afraid.

Surthawara returned to his realm by the white-enamelled private railway coaches which had been built to take him to the coronation of Chamunnar.

He was met at his frontier and again at Meccrapur station with musicians and garlands and a great crowd, for his fame had gone before him and at the city-gates he passed under a triumphal arch of flowers. Reolia was there to receive him, a fine dignified man like his father according to privilege the chief vassals were at the gates and the doors of the Palace the kettle-drums rolled and the cannon fired.

"The Resident Sahib hopes to have your permission to call on you to-morrow morning," said Reolia, when the ceremonies of reception were over and he was left alone with his master.

"I shall be happy to receive him," replied the prince. "Enquire also whether I may call on the queen, my mother, after the heat to-morrow—Now, as my time is very short, Diwan Sahib, I cannot delay business. I will rest from the journey at once, and will request your presence for six o'clock this evening. We will proceed to detail to-morrow evening and I will hold my Council on the fourth day and a Durbir in five days' time and thereafter attend the People's Council."

At six o'clock Partab of Reolia waited on the prince, who was not ready till half an hour later. He had drawn up the points of a general report. Surthawara heard him out, asking questions here and there. The committee that he had appointed had produced its report on active village institutions and a scheme for the education of the villagers in responsibility.

"H'm," said Surthawara. "Very good. Arrange a time for me

to see them informally, in your presence, before I hold my Council —From the general tenor of your report, Diwan Sahib, I gather that you are uneasy about the financial position . you wish to recommend retrenchment, in fact ”

“ There are very heavy expenses to be met, Maharajah Sahib ”

“ Of course —I think there was also a suggestion that there was discontent in some portion of the people you mentioned the chiefs of the Mers What has been taking place ? Have Congress agents got in ? ”

“ No, Maharajah Sahib ”

“ Well, what is it ? ”

Partab of Reolia looked at his sovereign with circumspection, but without fear

“ The trouble has nothing to do with agents inside the State, Maharajah Sahib,” he stated “ Outside, however, there is trouble against the State The Mers who were living at Jalankar and in the next valley lived till after the palace was opened among their kin but after that they wandered out over the frontier into the land of the Raj ”

“ Continue ”

“ Some of them scattered and went to bring in the cotton-harvest of Dhar, where there was trouble, because of the migrant people who come round to pick it yearly and consider it their livelihood

“ Some of them formed bands and committed dacoities

“ Some of them joined in political disturbances and looting before the Raj made its pact with Congress in March

“ Politicians heard of the case and turned it to account ”

Reolia stopped

“ So the Resident Sahib will call on me to-morrow morning,” said Surthawara with sardonic humour “ I was inclined to be flattered at his haste, but I see I need not congratulate myself Why did no report of this reach me ? ”

“ The parts of it have only come together in the last two or three weeks ”

“ I see And what is it that you have still not told me ? I understood there was some feeling in the State itself ? ”

This needed more courage than the rest The older man looked gravely at his prince

“ Some of them came back in a small band,” he said, “ and destroyed a good part of the young trees in the *ramna* of Jalankar and the next valley ”

There was a silence at this Surthawara’s blood quickened He began to look blackly

“ Did they receive help, or only sympathy ? ”

“ There is no evidence More fled than had come back ”

“ Ha,” exclaimed the prince, and rising in the abrupt energy of anger, he walked off up the room and returning, stared at his minister with flashing eyes

"A useless and turbulent population," he said headlong "Treach-
erous mountaineers, sons of dogs and whores, I'll have them taught
their lesson You said their chieftains wished to wait on me Very
good Appoint the time and I'll deal with them Their fathers have
ever been thorns in the side of our fathers I'll root them out once
and for all, root and branch I'll root them out, and in foreign lands
their young children will mourn the day their fathers lifted the head of
rebellion in Surthawara "

The prince was in a great passion, and with a great effort now curbed
himself

"You have heard, Diwan Sahib," he said "You may go "

Reolia did not go or speak

Raemall looked at him dangerously

"You are a brave man, Reolia," he said, "that I appreciate my
house is much indebted to the valour and service of yours but I
warn you not to restrain my justice, or you will find yourself outside
Surthawara, wanting for a lord with the Mers "

"The word of a prince is sacred," rejoined the vassal, "I beg your
grace, for I cannot hear, Maharaj, I am deaf, it is a deafness that falls
on me suddenly I have not heard any of what my prince has said,
I have not heard any of it "

He bowed with due ceremony and backed from the presence

Raemall stood still, astonished, staring at the doors through which
his minister had disappeared then he paced up and down the room,
at first further infuriated by Reolia's totally unexpected move but
presently seeing himself under the compulsion either of committing
a human and political crime, a crime also against honour, for trouble-
some as the Mers of Surthawara were, they stood in vassalage to
the Rajputs and had fought for them as often as they had risen
against them or of eating his words Two men at least would
always know that he had eaten his words himself, and Partab of
Reolia

When he received the Resident, now one Mr Henry Adams, he
had schooled himself into the appearance of calm He had, moreover,
made up his mind that the forcible ejection of the thousands of Mers
among the hills was an impossible procedure at this stage of history
and especially the present stage of politics but in another age he
would have punished them for destroying his preserves by making
them fly before fire and sword and desecration, and these were in his
heart

There remained Partab of Reolia

That could wait a little

He dealt very ably and politely with Mr Adams and his representations
on the Government's behalf He had only wished to lend some effect
to the Government's re-afforestation policy to attract rainfall He
sketched one or two plans he had already formed for setting up crafts
among the Mer villages, so that they could support a greater popula-

non than by hull-agriculture alone, and could re-absorb such of the vagrant Mers as could be found and brought back

Mr Adams, who was newly appointed, breathed more freely The prince was a charming fellow, and much more reasonable and practical than some croakers had suggested This had been a pretty difficult start for a new office, and he was mightily relieved to have got through so well The Diwan Sahib was a tougher nut to crack you could not get past his reserve And all the men who hung about the Palace and capital in connection with the polo-teams they were all friendly but you could not get past their reserve either Thank God the prince at least was more accessible

But then Mr Adams did not discern the fire and sword in Surthawara's heart

Raemall went in the cooler afternoon to wait on his mother

Krishna Lal Maharam was now a woman of fifty-five or so, surprisingly plump, considering the austerities obligatory upon her as a widow Her skin was smooth though beginning to slip a little on her face and arms but she still had some beauty

She greeted her son with affection and enquired into all his doings (which she knew of by hearsay and from newspapers) with considerable pride and interest but all these were shot through with maternal, correction of a spiritual nature observations upon the eating of unholy food, and the rites of purification ahead observations upon the crossing of the Black Water observations upon the total lapse of religious practice in all those months abroad and much more beside She never named her daughter-in-law

Finally she said to her son, "Since you are flying—surely an impiety and presumptuous but one cannot hold back fate—since you are returning to England in September, my son, this must be our first and last greeting and there is a matter of which I must speak"

"What is this?" asked Raemall, defensively, and at a loss

"It is now all decided," replied his mother, "this morning Pal Budh the son of Madho Budh found the hour and the day, and to-morrow I enter upon three days of fasts and preparation"

"For what?"

"For a pilgrimage"

"You are too well advanced in years to go on pilgrimages, O my mother"

"Nevertheless, I go, and I lay it upon myself to go in a state of extreme purity and humbleness"

Raemall saw visions of his mother patronising the third class on the railways

"If you go," he said, "you may have my white coaches, as a mark of my filial duty"

"Thank you, my son but the railway is not a hallowed thing and I go by road"

"Then, O my mother, if you will wait awhile, my gift from England

to you will be at your disposal a motor-car with purdah windows and a purple cloth lining, very suitable for pilgrimage "

" Thank you, my son, my heart overflows towards you nevertheless this would be to go in luxury I would go afoot but since I have no strength for this, it is settled that I go as the humblest go, in a bullock-cart "

She would not be dissuaded

There is nothing exceptional about going on pilgrimages in India, and by every variety of means Raemall took it as a natural and even characteristic procedure among elderly women, and thinking that the pilgrimage would certainly be in the interest of her husband's soul, enquired on which pilgrimage she was going, and for what object ?

An expression which might have been called sanctimonious settled on the lady's features

" I am making a pilgrimage to the seven shrines of the Lord Krishna in Rajasthan," she replied, " to see if He will not in His mercy again bless this house, as once before He blessed me when I despaired His Ashtami I will keep at Nathdwara itself, to see if perchance in memory of his own sacred Birth among men, the Lord will look upon us and bless us "

Krishna Lal had not forgotten the effect upon her son when she last touched this subject but she considered it her duty, as his mother, to guide him aright if it lay in her power She might have had some trace of effect if her righteousness had not been a luxury to her

Raemall's face became perfectly expressionless He said nothing Krishna Lal presently continued

" It would doubtless please the God better if she who is in want of blessing were herself to go," she said, " but if she will not, or if you forbid her, then perchance I can touch Him, since I found favour once before It is a thing that cannot be put off, my son you must have your son and the State its prince if she cannot find favour, then another must be found who will be blessed of Heaven I know it is a very hard thing, my life, for the sake of the love you bear her yet your honoured father my lord loved his first wife, and took two others for this end Before you follow his example, give her the opportunity to seek the Lord Krishna's mercy, my son, leave her behind this time, for surely it is in her heart to humble herself in pilgrimage for thy son "

Raemall was infuriated by his mother's unctuousness but there was no denying her reasoning With his anger about the Mers not more than damped down, he was in no state to stand further provocation, and it was as if Krishna Lal had taken a carding-comb to rake over a wound

" All this talk of gods and blessings," he burst out, " in the light of science it is so much twaddle and superstition Pilgrimages to stocks and stones at the bidding of priests who thrive on credulity—when shall we ever be rid of the thralldom of women and priests? Why will you for ever attribute accidents of nature to the interference of

the gods ? Are they so mean and so vindictive that they plan accidents ? What do the gods care if men are sick or childless ! Must they everlastingly be bought and bribed with honours and abasement ? ”

He broke off abruptly, staring at his mother in the pitch of anger and mortification

She was horrified at his blasphemy, and the tears came into her eyes, and she cried his name two or three times, and began to call down blessings and protections and forgiveness on him, entreating all the hierarchy of gods, great, lesser, and peculiar to the house and he laughed angrily and went away

After this his ministers and councillors found him impatient and irritable in his examinations, and he dealt shortly with them

Tara Devi found him fierce and moody, and she suffered at his hands

Krishna Lal's intention was kept quiet by her household till she was actually going, and then the bruit of it went abroad in the city and countryside and the extreme humbleness of her curtailed progress convinced the people that she was a holy woman, and there seldom lacked a straggle of followers to go part of the way with her, till she was out of the State and beyond its borders strangers followed

“ The Senior Lady never called me to her,” said Tara Devi to her husband when she heard the news it had hurt her, for there was no ill-feeling on her side, “ and now I shall not have seen her before we are gone again Yet she did not depart for five days after our return ”

Raemall turned where he stood and looked at her in a way that was strange This time there had been no escape from the issue raised by his mother He could get no child from his wife There had been a lusty succession of women before his marriage, and various after, though he retained none and as it happened, none had had child of him This nightmare, the nightmare of his sonlessness, now fully quickened, had haunted him these four days so that now he was looking at his childless wife strangely

“ My mother was already engaged in preparatory austerities,” he at length replied He then, without speaking, scrutinised Tara Devi with a glance at once cold and burning and for so long, that foreboding fell on her till finally he said, “ She will no doubt see you on her return this time I do not take you with me ” Tara Devi, utterly surprised, became still it was as if he had not spoken only the pupils of her eyes dilated Since she said nothing, he added, “ Do you not know for what object she goes on pilgrimage ? ”

Tara Devi visibly compelled herself, and not taking her eyes off her husband's face, replied, “ No is it not for my lord your honoured father's soul ? ”

“ She is going to the seven shrines of Krishna, and especially to keep the Ashtami at Nathdwara ” Raemall paused, alien and watchful and she making no sign, he concluded, “ She does this in order to see if the God may be persuaded to give you a son ”

It was as if he had struck Tara Devi Her lips parted and she pressed a hand convulsively against her breast

He continued to look at her as if she were nothing of his

"This time," he presently repeated, "I am not taking you to Europe with me The separation may profit us both " He paused, and went on, "If you decide to follow my mother's example and go on a pilgrimage in your own behalf, you may do so. You are a religious woman, it is for you to decide A woman who is not a mother is but half a thing I shall leave you in my brother's keeping, not in hers But my mother is right I require my son We have delighted long enough "

His tone had changed now he accused

Tara Devi went pale

"My lord," she cried, "this has ever been a great sorrow, and I will gladly undertake the pilgrimage, and lose no time, for the Ashtami is upon us and while thou art away I will do penance and put all pleasures from me but only forgive the sorrow of thy slave."

"It is an accident," said Raemall, and after another pause, added, "nevertheless, all expedients may be tried "

"Only forgive me, only forgive me," pleaded Tara Devi

"Have I not said it is an accident ? " rejoined Raemall.

Tara Devi covered her face with her hands and bowed herself together and wept

For a long time Raemall looked at her, cold and unrelated : then he began to come nearer, as though he might at each moment turn back from her, and being at last come, he took hold of her wrists and drew down her hands

She would not raise her head, but kept it bent and away from him The smooth head, the crimson parting, the jasmine in the glossy knot of hair, the pearl at her ear He shivered, travelling deep within himself

With difficult utterance, he whispered at last, "It must be thy son to follow me I want no other woman's sons "

He was not cold now, but laboured

Suddenly it all broke away, and he came back to his passionate affection for her

"Thou canst keep the Ashtami here, at the shrine of Meerapur," he exclaimed, "in what strict observance thou wilt but the pilgrimage must wait till I am gone—I cannot have thee in the land and not have thee—it is only a little time to wait After Ashtami, thou art mine again, for a little while and then—then—I have thee not—I have thee not "

CHAPTER XIV

1931-1932

PILGRIMAGE

BEFORE Surthawara again left for Europe, the three race-horses had arrived, One Way and Pendred and Folly, under the escort of Bikramajit of Dol · and Sangram arrived, having sold his villa in Sicily

The horses were in good condition Raemall was delighted with them · he was down at the stables three or four times a day On the third day he rode them himself, gently

"Wonderful," he said, "wonderful, well done, Bikramajit I would never have believed you could have brought them through in such fettle what animals ! They will make history the Surthawara strain" He turned to them with praise and endearments

"And you, Pendred," he addressed the last of the three, "little do you realise the honour in store presently for you you shall sire one of the greatest horses of the world · when you know Manuka, then you will begin to guess" Pendred was a light chestnut, and he reached after the prince's arm with a friendly nip

"Well," said Raemall, turning to Bikramajit, "next year, my dear fellow, we shall set about the polo-records in earnest again I can't let politics rob all my laurels You'll like that, eh ?"

Bikramajit Singh turned his attention from the horses to his prince, and his face lit up

"I shall like that," he replied "We have lost too much time, Maharaj the string and the men are in the prime"

"Aha ! I have a very particular plan for them next year or the year after And the racing string is immature"

"That is immature but I am glad we continue the great polo next year It is not good to defer"

"One has calls outside the State, my dear fellow"

"No doubt, no doubt there is plenty to do inside the State also"

"All right, Bikram," said Raemall laughing, "next year I will be very good, just horses and housekeeping"

He went away still laughing he was laughing at himself for the tolerance with which he took the strictures of his master of horse. Bikramajit was single-hearted, sagacious, and devoid of sophistication he could oppose, but not offend

Sangram was as delighted with the horses as ever his brother was : his delight being privately tempered, however, by misgivings as to those lavish expenses He also saw that there was a serious trouble being kept well from view the queen-mother was on pilgrimage, Tara Devi as beautiful as ever, but changed, as if she had grown older. She no longer sought Sangram's society, and Raemall never spoke of her in casual talk

Towards the end of his time, Raemall sent for Sangram in the evening to come to him in the billiard-room he was alone, and had dismissed his courtiers.

"I have serious matters to discuss with you, brother," he said, on the verge of an ill humour, offering Sangram a cigarette, and lighting up himself. "Perhaps I have been putting them off. I wish to leave you in charge while I am away this time. Reolia continues in office for the present and will be your right-hand man—a devoted minister, as you will no doubt prove for yourself. I leave you also in supreme charge of the Palace." He paused, and Sangram saw that he was having difficulty with himself. "She is going on pilgrimage," he said. "The priests will arrange the most suitable route, but her progress will be your responsibility. Nothing excessive is to be attempted. In ruling that I cede you my full authority, you are to judge in it according to what you know of me and not according to your own view. The household know this and so do the priests and herself. Above all——" He broke off and went on again in a hard voice, "above all, she is not to come under my mother's guidance." He stopped.

"Very good," said Sangram, guessing what this pilgrimage must be, distressed both for his brother and his sister-in-law, and prevented from expression by his brother's reserve.

Raemall, remembering that Sangram must be quite out of touch with the State, sketched the principal projects and undertakings, but briefly.

"You can go into it all with Reolia," he concluded. "There are no changes to make that cannot wait till my return—courts, justice, the People's Council, and the council itself—that's about all, just a matter of keeping things running. If you start behaving like a real tyrant, there will be a protest from the Resident, you can hear it if you try, like a bat's squeak. But it will all come naturally to a philosophic man like yourself. Don't spend too much time asking Raghudeva Rao for advice—meditation takes too long." His expression lightened for a moment and then darkened a little again, as the sun strikes through a cloud, all stirs in the shifting light, and then it is gone. "The stables," he said, "I leave you as the captain of the teams. I have no doubt you have much practice to make up. I hope you may join my teams in the spring—but be careful not to strain yourself by trying to make up your skill too quickly. Bikramajit is dictator in the stables. There are to be no new economies voted upon the stables. I mention this, because Reolia seems to regard the stables as if he were a *bania* rather than a Rajput."

He stubbed out his cigarette in an ashtray embossed with the arms adopted by his house—two lions holding up a shield surmounted by the ancient and native emblem of Surthawara, a sun with pointed rays behind a peak. He picked up the ashtray and stared with moody inattention at the arms. He then looked up, and his dark brilliant eyes rested on his brother with a most curious expression—they seemed to forbid, and yet look out with fierce appeal from behind the bars of their own forbidding.

Sangram was exceedingly distressed by what he divined—but he

made no move, knowing that if he trespassed into that reserve, he might kindle an anger that would send him into exile again

Raemall turned and rolled the billiard balls up and down the table, his soft strong hand manipulating them with what amounted to legerdemain. He took up a cue and made half a dozen fancy shots, exhibiting the same almost unnatural skill. Turning his back on Sangram he walked round the room slowly, considering the trophies, his hands in his pockets, he was wearing European clothes, a dinner suit of fine cut, which set off his shoulders and his narrow flanks. Its civilised blackness a contrast to the turban of sky-blue muslin, with a diamond pin set at one side matching the small shirt studs, and also matching the solitaire earrings, so sober and yet so barbaric.

The next wall would be the wall of Tara Devi's first trophies. He broke off halfway there, turned into the room again, and stared at the billiard balls, and then at his brother, with that expression

"I don't know what's going to come of the future, Sanga," he said, and, dropping his eyes, absently rolled the billiard balls again, repeating, "I don't know." Then before Sangram could take it up, or he progress further towards stripping himself, he said quickly, with a complete change of mood, "Come on, we'll have a game. I'll give you fifty up and beat you. This is the cue you like, isn't it? Just time for a game. It's getting late. In two days I'll be at sea. Billiards with the fiddles on, eh?"

He laughed, and he won his game, and finally went to his rooms in the exhilaration of a victory.

As soon as Surthawara had sailed, together with Hamir Singh of Rajboland and two other of his nobles, Tara Devi entered upon her preparatory asceticisms. She put away all bright colours, wearing skirts and bodices made only of coarse cotton material, in a natural shade not quite the white of mourning. She wore no jewels and no flowers in her hair. She gave up the coquetry of henna'd palms and soles, retaining only the crimson parting of the married woman. She put away all instruments of music or other diversion. She dismissed all luxurious furnishings, sleeping on a string *charpoy* in a bare room. She ate only one meal a day and that was very plain. In addition to her morning and evening ritual of worship in her chapel, other times were appointed and the intervals were filled with sacred reading, meditation, and teaching from her family priest. All this was not the great departure it would be in the West for the orthodox Indian woman's life is regulated from beginning to end, from dawn to the last lamp of evening, in trivialities as in greater matters, by religion. Tara Devi's was however a regimen of extreme physical and mental discipline, and she observed it with an earnestness born of a beseeching and frightened heart—frightened not for herself, but for the effect of frustration on her husband.

Sangram, as her guardian, saw her once a day, in the late afternoon. At first she could find nothing to say to him and in fact was rather

strange with him she had no desire for frivolous subjects, and was afraid to embark on anything else. She was by no means shallow: but everything in her life had come to her abundant and almost unalloyed. She had never talked seriously to anyone. she lived on love and gallant dreams, on the passing moment and the opal future, and for those that lived with her, was like the crest of the wave that catches the sparkle of the sun.

By degrees, however, she became accustomed to her new self, that lived among strange thoughts of dooms and eternities, destines, divinities, penances, absolutions and prayer. the unguessable and the portentous became her reality. sometimes, with her husband gone, she felt as if she were but a soul roaming the dim interstellar realm of the spirit. The world of walls and flowers and sun and men and women, so easily apprehended, so specious, came to seem unreal.

Sangram, seeing that the things she used to talk about were dismissed from her life, came to talk of his doings in the day. what he had seen and found. how things went in the State. plans and realisations. Tara Devi found this interesting, for there was something behind it all that was akin to her own quest. Sangram, watching her carefully as the weeks went by, for his brother's sake as well as for the affection he himself bore her, noticed that though she was no thinner, she was somehow etherealised, she was sweeter than she ever had been, her youth and beauty had become an ageless loveliness. she was become a digit of the moon.

One day she said to him, "Sanga, when you left us suddenly and went away, I was told you went to a teacher up the mountains. Who was he? and what did you learn? What did you learn?"

"His name was Raghudeva Rao, a Jain," replied Sangram. "I am not sure if I yet know what I learnt then. it seems as if I were always weighing events and facts against theories, to find out where the truth lies."

"For example," took up Tara Devi with a sudden eagerness, "you weigh the driving of the passions against the goal of passionlessness. is not this ruin, and that stagnation?"

Sangram looked at her, startled. was this intelligence, or her not unequal sister, intuition?

"What do you know of the driving of the passions?" he asked at last.

Tara Devi cast her eyes down and dropped her head.

"In myself," she said, "nothing. with me, it is all longing . . . or delight. yet how . . . how indeed can you ask me . . . what I know of the driving of the passions."

He saw tears shining under her eyelashes before she turned her head away to wipe them off with her head-scarf. She must, after all, in the natures of herself and his brother, know suffering as well as ecstasy. She rose up and without turning to him again, left him.

After this, when they talked, it was often of the nature of things.

she contributing little, though to the point, being unpractised in such talk, but thirsty to listen. He found that she had a good understanding and he loved her the more for it, since of beautiful women one asks little beyond that they avoid folly. Finally the long preparation was over, the appointed time came, and she departed saffron-clad upon her pilgrimage to the shrines of the god Krishna, the god who was himself a babe among men on the sacred banks of the River Jumna.

Krishna Lal Maharam returned from her pilgrimage soon after Tara Devi had set out. She sent for Sangram.

It was the first time in years that he had seen her, and he was struck at once by the plump health of her person and the radiance of self-satisfaction that hung round her. Talk of her ascetic life of devotions had reached him. Seeing her, he concluded that her asceticisms were done chiefly in the spirit and the purse.

She welcomed him with a wealth of polite and fulsome expressions. Presently she came to the point.

"I learn that my son's wife has also set forth on a pilgrimage," she said. "Since you must know what her arrangements are, where she goes and under whose direction, I come to you for information."

Sangram informed her of her daughter-in-law's style, route, and that she was in charge of the priest she had brought from her own family.

Krishna Lal nodded.

"It might better have been a priest of our house to guide her," she said, "since he would have a deeper interest touching this matter, and would be less likely to mitigate the rigours of her pilgrimage."

"She does in accordance with her conscience," replied Sangram, "and it is my office to meet her at various points on her route and see that she is well."

Krishna Lal did not approve of this. "It is unnecessary," she said, "and a distraction, and may have Heaven knows what consequences."

Sangram took her view patiently to pieces, and as Krishna Lal had no head for reasoning, she fell to discovering the points of her daughter-in-law's austerities, giving advice and opinions and useful hints with a professionalism that made Sangram feel half angry and half inclined to laugh. He also resented her whole attitude for it was clear that she considered Tara Devi ought to have been put under her own spiritual and domestic direction.

"I am sorry," she said, sighing, "that I had no chance to help her more particularly as one that has gone twice on this pilgrimage, and once found supreme favour with the Lord, I could perhaps have suggested certain procedures. Nevertheless, the appointed hour for setting out will not wait who knows that better than I."

"She had the profit of your example, and yielded to the force of its persuasion," observed Sangram, maliciously unable to resist playing his brother's mother along her bent.

"Ah," said Krishna Lal with modesty, "if that has helped, it is

something : should no blessing be granted to the house, yet may we have warded off other wrath ”

Unable to bear her stifling atmosphere any longer Sangram took his leave and on getting into his car outside, directed the driver to move over, and drove himself out to Pratabgarh. He drove fast. He was oppressed, he must be exorcised, and he knew no place more fit than Pratabgarh. If he felt like this, temperate as he was, how must Raemall have felt oppressed and possessed ! He left the car in the village below and made his way up to the tenantless palace, with its walls of rose-ochre, now peeling and disclosing the native mud beneath.

He stood under the leafy peepul tree and looked down over village and valley. The whole of his interview with the queen-mother was present in him, in a single focus of illumination.

“ God have mercy,” he muttered to himself. “ She would have made a bad man of the veriest philosopher or saint ”

It was at this time that Sangram began to pick up again one of his boyhood friendships, that with Lunkaran Singh of Bhadana, who now came to play as a stop-gap in the second team. His other friend, Kashinath the Jain’s son, lived now in Karachi. He found Lunkaran an agreeable associate. However he had in fact little time to spare from his work with Partab of Reolia, much his senior, but a man with whom he had natural affinity.

Reolia was relieved, but not surprised, to find in his prince’s younger brother a man who was patient of regularity and detail, and ready to look facts in the face. Sangram implemented his brother’s promise to start some sort of industry among the Mers in view of their primitive state—their husbandry was elementary, even by Indian standards, they were rather hunters and woodsmen—he thought wood-work and wood-carving probably the most suited to them, and certainly unlikely to cut across the prerogatives of any other trade or castes, for Surthawara being on the fringe of the desert, no such craft had grown up. He also gave an impetus to the education of the villages in responsibility, for the scheme seemed merely to provide a living for its committee, which now did nothing whatever. He further took up the whole question of education itself.

The chief embarrassment lay in finance. The credit of the state had stood high, its available resources were good but Raemall had indulged in some very large expenses.

“ If we go gently for the next ten years, we shall restore the position, Maharaj,” said the Diwan, “ if we foster trade, we might improve it but at the present rate, the State will be going heavily into debt in two or three years. I do not think his Highness altogether appreciates the nature of an embarrassed Treasury ”

Sangram, considering the budget of the State (which was not a public document, or available even to the Council) thought that Reolia’s observations were somewhat restrained. Certainly Raemall had no conception of debt. Some people had money, and other people had

interesting uses for it. Once he would have forayed. now he borrowed. The difference was only one of terms.

Sangram watched the doings of his brother with great interest. *The Times* was posted to him by air. and he followed the Conference day by day in this and in similar weekly journals. He also followed it in those weekly intellectual papers which have no policy beyond a vigorous discontent with everything, and whose chief office is to act as a purge in cases of mental constipation. Between the discretion of the one sort and contrariness of the other, he formed a fair idea of the progress of the Conference. and it seemed to him that not only had it lost its first rapture, but that some element was disrupting its tendency to reach agreement.

Raemall made four or five speeches. but only two seemed to have been up to his former standard. All were brilliant. but only twice did he rise to that enthusiasm that swept his hearers with him.

Tara Devi returned from her long pilgrimage. Sangram had gone by car to meet her at this point or that, to be sure that all was well. She allowed herself to be seen, she answered questions. but she was entirely remote, concentrated upon her purpose. She obediently went to see her mother-in-law, listening with meekness and docility to all her advice, devoid of resentment, but adopting only that which seemed good. Sangram saw her daily in the interval of her practices. wearing her coarse colourless clothing, unadorned, in her bare room. It was, indeed, as though the sun had changed into the moon.

The time came when Raemall was due to return. All became a bustle and preparation. nobles whose duty it was to stand by at their prince's return set up in their town houses. secretaries drew up statements and accounts, soldiers polished their curved swords, stablemen and elephant men and kennel men and chauffeurs fell to upon their charges, the citizens organised receptions, the Palace began to seethe and chatter. Sangram and the Diwan prepared a document. the Resident called.

In the midst of all this Tara Devi pursued her quiet way, undistracted. No one could take her from that way except her lord.

Raemall was flying back. This news threw his mother into a state with which Sangram had found it difficult to cope. she sent for him. she gave him an account of the horoscope of the proposed flight, which was not disastrous but full of ill promise. she was a prey to maternal anxiety which knew neither reason nor restraint, and to superstitious fears. To fly was in itself to provoke the wrath of Heaven. if the holy Mahatma Gandhi condemned trains as impious, then what of aeroplanes! And to fly under this dire conjunction of the heavenly bodies! She had already sent off a flock of cables to stop her son, and would send more as soon as she had other pronouncements from the

astrologers and pundits let Sangram add his dissuasion: she was going to summon the Resident to get him to act in concert

"My son may believe you or him," she said, "for he is scarcely accessible to piety. I would have stopped him before, but was on pilgrimage."

"I cannot do it," said Sangram, "it is too late nor will the Resident Sahib do that and besides, Maharani Sahiba, if the train and aeroplane are impious, how much more impious the device by which your words or voice may go by wires or over the air half round the world in a moment or two. No wonder the prince is unpersuaded for all the virtue must go out of your messages by force of this impiety."

Krishna Lal clasped her hands together

"Ah, ah," she exclaimed, "there is truth in that, Sangramji. What shall I do? I must pray the more. How is my daughter conducting herself? Alas, the flight is most ill-starred. But perhaps the aeroplane will not start in the stated hour. But perhaps another hour is worse. I must have the other hours cast. How many hours before or after the given hour may an aeroplane start? What can I then do? If Pal Budh were to find the least inauspicious hour could you prevail on the Airways authorities to start in that hour? I will find all that may be necessary to persuade them. Do this for me, Maharaj!"

Sangram found her maddening, but she disgusted him less than at other times, for her natural anxiety as a mother was uppermost

He arranged to be on the airfield at Delhi to meet his brother, taking with him three friends and three spare cars, to run the party back the two hundred and fifty miles to Surthawara on the following day. The house at Delhi had been opened and the cooks and servants had gone ahead by rail.

The big air-station at Delhi was not then inaugurated. Now there is a great building and all the accessories of an air-port, but then there was only a bare *maidan*. Presently, about the time due, there was the noise of a 'plane, and soon the great air-liner was circling down out of the blue, landed far across the field, and came bumping over. Steps were run up, doors opened, the passengers emerged, and here was Raemall, followed by Rajboland and the other two and a couple of attendants.

Raemall greeted his brother with affectionate exuberance.

"Old Jandore's on board," he said, "he is dining with us to-night," and turning back to the 'plane, gave a hand to the burly elderly man whom Sangram had met the year before shaking hands again, each seemed to confirm his cordial liking of the other. There are some friendships which do not flower fast, but on the other hand are subject to no setback.

Sangram's impression of his brother was that he too had changed, perhaps as much as Tara Devi but in what direction he did not yet entirely see. Raemall's momentary preoccupation was the topic of flying.

"I have learned to pilot a machine," he said, "so has Rajboland

I am convinced the future lies in the air. Of course once you're really up you lose all sensation of speed or height unless you strike an air-pocket, when you realise where you are after all. nothing to compare by. there's no thrill in it unless you are going low and fast: then it is superb. I have plans for an air-field down at Hastina. India cannot be left out of air-development she will need her pilots. We will be in the van. the first air-equipped State in India." He laughed. "My poor mother," he said, "she disapproves entirely. There's only one form of flying she allows for a man. and that's the flight to Heaven in the arms of an Apsara."

Perhaps he was only very much himself.

The evening came, and with it the Maharajah of Jandore. Surthawara was intensely pleased at having secured the honour of the senior man as his guest. There were also present two other men who lived in Delhi: one an Indian Liberal, Sir Mangal Shandu, the other a celebrated Indian canal engineer. The Liberal was a Brahman of advanced views, with a distinguished legal career behind him. The engineer was of inferior caste to his hosts, so perhaps the dinner had some social significance.

Sangram and his two companions from the State, as well as the two Delhi guests, were interested to hear about the personalities and acts of the Conference. Raemall was in excellent form. English was quite naturally the language employed, the dialects of the Kashmiri, the Madrassi, and the Rajputs being widely dissimilar.

"Reading between the lines," observed Sangram, "I should guess that the spirit of cooperation was a bit halt this time."

"One recalls Mr. Mohammed Ali's admirable summary at the last session," replied his brother, "his variation of '*divide et impera*,' addressed to the British."

"What was that?" asked the engineer.

"'*We divide and you rule*,' " quoted Raemall.

"And what lamed cooperation this time, do you consider?" enquired the Liberal.

"Why, who but the Mahatma," replied Raemall. "His gift for sowing dissent is incomparable. He was on both the Federal Structure and Minorities Committees. He got the Minorities adjourned for a week, and at the end found himself able to declare, '*It is with deep sorrow and deeper humiliation that I have to announce utter failure to secure an agreed solution of the communal question*.' I quote from memory, but I think accurately." Raemall, in quoting, had mimicked the leader to a nicety. He continued, when the laughter subsided, "He is devoid of political sense. he wishes to pass without a period of transition to a state of no-plan rule—just love and spinning-wheels and orthodox observance. I'm a Rajput, and orthodox, as Rajputs go, but a flagrant sinner, as his orthodoxy goes. I should stick fast in the observances and destructive superstitions of past millennia, never move off my acre nor mount a push-bicycle. That, our Vaisya Saint considers, is the way to win respect and standing in the modern

world The Mahatma limits a man to the powers of his hands and feet. The resources of the brain may not be exploited—Well, perhaps I exaggerate over the push-bicycle it is very like a spinning-wheel and possibly thus far finds grace”

Here Raemall caught Sangram's eye, and a look of intelligence passed between them both were thinking of Krishna Lal Maharam and her flock of horoscopolical cables and wireless messages

“He had one access of realism,” observed Rajboland “When he was discussing the retention of British troops in India, and seemed to be seeing himself as C-in-C, or perhaps P M—do you remember? The ‘*proud Rajputs*’ passage”

“I remember!” Raemall quoted again, again in the very voice of his subject, sweet and rather piping, and by some means producing even the impression of his exceedingly different appearance “‘*The Army will not accept my command I know that very well*,’ he said—‘*I know the British Commander-in-Chief will not accept my command nor would the Sikhs, nor the proud Rajputs—none of them would accept my command But I expect, even so, to exercise that command with the goodwill of the British people*’ The first sentences are realistic How I laughed afterwards! His technique is so simple personal rectitude extreme obstinacy a call to the conscience the money-lender's tenacious sagacity and not a constructive political idea in his head.”

The talk veered away into more general topics but the Saint was woven all through it like a leit-motif The Maharajah of Jandrore was rather quiet, watching his young host with pleasure, but not without a certain speculation Sangram was quiet too, more so than usual He admired his brother's acumen and his political vision and yet, he remembered, there was that statement waiting at home, drawn up by himself and the Diwan How could Raemall see things as he did and act as he did? From village education in the use of the vote, to the problems of Federation, nothing was beyond his grasp and at home the hillmen were dispossessed for a pleasure-palace in a hunting preserve Did he suffer from the same disease as the arch-political of India? Was it an Indian disease? the disease an astute mind divorced from practicality?

Sir Mangal Shandu was speaking

“Is it not extraordinary,” he said, “how the name and actions of that man have pervaded the talk even of this table It passes my comprehension I am of course no friend of his he disrupted the party to which I belonged, the Liberalism of Mr Gokhale, and has ruined Indian progress his achievement is extraordinary—You know how, as a people, we do in general show great facility of intellect early in youth Once I investigated his beginnings and I found that he was on every score a failure He was poor at school He was a failure at the college of Bhavnagar He studied at Gray's Inn, was called to the Bar, and never practised in England that is not easy His practice in India was a failure He failed to step into the Dewanship of Rajkot

which he should have inherited comfortably from his father. In Africa alone, so far as I can see, were his offices both good and successful. Otherwise, he has achieved his position in each case by the process of finding a grievance, working it, exciting it, aggravating it, playing the saintly mediator, and riding in higher on the unsolved flood of disturbance. One allows, of course, for the fact that schooling and examinations are modern trials of youthful ability nevertheless, the greatest teachers seem to have been able from their youth up—Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Christ, Confucius—Sturdy men and able-witted.”

“But my dear sir, that is the answer,” Surthawara instantly took him up. “He and his followers are mostly of the school of early failure. He in particular is one of the mob-magicians. He now redeems the failures of his puny youth, which he no doubt felt acutely, by swaying the masses. He may not have your sort of brains—so he harps on the conscience and the emotions. The only qualification you need for success in this, is an absolutely over-mastering desire to have an effect. This is the day of the great anarchists, the false prophets, as the British call them—people who preach holiness and sacred causes, and have no plan beyond the enthroning of their ego. I’ll give you a parallel to the Mahatma—this man rising in Germany, Hitler. He is a religious leader, for he is a race-mystic and a prude. He is the dud artist and architect, the dud corporal, and he is becoming the prophet of Germany—he sways them—he is inwardly hungry to be great, a hunger matched only by his void—and only by swaying the largest possible number of people can he convince himself that he truly is great, and wipe out his rankling failures. And Mussolini—not so far as I know a dud bricklayer, but a low blackguardly fellow bursting to get possessions and position—the man who engineered the march on Rome, and funked the march himself.” He broke off, laughing whole-heartedly at that ludicrous cowardice, and continued still laughing, “All three of them see themselves as generals, Hitler and Mussolini, and the Mahatma C-in-C. Beware of all who were youthful duds or socially despised and are forging to the front! They are not getting to the front by ability but—forgive me!—aha—by forgery. You know them because they advertise themselves, blatantly like Mussolini, apologetically like Hitler, eucharistically like our Mahatma.”

—But for the company, Sangram would have gone out and wept.

The Surthawara party reached home towards five o’clock, having started before dawn and spent the middle of the day as the guests of the ruler through whose territory they had to pass.

At the frontier was the first reception, an arch of flowers, nobles, officials, a clapping crowd—as they entered the city gates of Meerapur, the cannon fired their salute, the cannon from Ranthambor took up the signal, the appointed officers and nobles received their sovereign: the cortège was garlanded with great scented garlands, as thick as your

arm, hanging to the waist and knees, a mass of roses, jasmine, tuberose, the sacred mangold, entwined with purple thread and gold tinsel - even the bonnets of the cars were garlanded.

They proceeded slowly through the narrow crooked streets of the city ; all the painted houses had hung out strips and ribbons and garlands, the temples flew pennants - about the cars swirled the familiar brown mob of India, in gala clothes, mouths stained crimson with betel gaping and shouting, betel-stained teeth grinning, hands clapping myriad as aspen-leaves, shirt-tails flapping, bony legs and bare feet prancing - peacocks screeched, flocks of parrots vociferated and darted green among the mango branches, pigeons patrolled all the parapets cooing angrily and swept aloft in flashing companies

In the great gate, an elephant tethered at each side, while the musicians struck up overhead, stood the nobles whose fathers from ancient time guarded an absent sovereign's palace and received him into it again - the great *nakkaras* loosed their drumfire and the long glossy cars slid into the court

Surthawara went through all the ceremonies of reception and resumption - darkness had long fallen before the forms were over

Tara Devi had sent a message to Sangram, to come and see her early and privately - he slipped away when he could leave his place and went to her

She was standing in her bare room - it was still bare, but lit by half a dozen wick-lamps, and he stopped on the threshold in utter amazement

The devotee of moonlight and shadow, of groping questions and dim excursions into ghostly realms, was gone - in her place stood a radiant woman, dressed in a stiff-skirted shimmer of silk muslin spun with fine gold, pale and immaterial as a cobweb, the gold thickening towards the hems, all the trimmings of a light vivid magenta, her hair shone, and behind her ear white jasmine and a rose starred the great glossy knot - her jewels were gold and pearls - her hands and feet were stained with henna, and her golden skin was like a petal and breathed perfume

"Sanga," she said, and clasped her fingers together - and he saw that the shadowy woman was not gone, but withdrawn deep into her, and looking out of her eyes, that were like antelope's - she did not smile, rather she was anxious or very serious - "Sanga, my brother," she said, "I wish him to come to me in this room, before all is done away, so that he may see I have not varied from what I undertook. He must lead me from this room and from this life himself - Explain it for me, will you explain it for me?"

He consented, and went away, unexpectedly shaken by this resurrection of Aphrodite. Presently, when Racmall was quit of the last retainer, and finally had dismissed even Rajboland and Bikramajit of Dol, Sangram gave him Tara Devi's message and the explanation as she desired

Raemall accepted it, but with a detachment that amounted to non-understanding. Sangram, who had never lost touch with the religion of his country, and had passed the last six months in contact with a living form of it, suddenly realised that it was as if he were speaking to a well-bred European of practices alien to him—more than that, he perceived, and recoiled from the perception, that he might almost be talking to his brother of some stranger.

Raemall made no comment, evidently because he thought little of what he had been told, smoked a cigarette, talked casually of a few other matters, and presently with some remark about seeing him on horseback next morning, went off.

He came to Tara Devi in the bare room—she was standing, on the far side, a little before the lamps, so that her scarf and skirts shone in a sort of aura, but the core of her was shadowed. He halted inside the room, looking at it curiously, even faintly repelled—the bare floor, the string *charpoy*, the coarse dress lying across it. He did not approach with the eagerness, far less the impetuosity, that she expected, and felt in herself.

Tara Devi, her heart beating with anticipation, and yet feeling a creeping chill of fear, put her hands together, palm to palm.

The gesture caught his eye, but walking to the dress on the *charpoy* he picked up the stuff of the skirt, fingered it, stared at it frowning, glanced round the room again, and said, "Well—well, this is all over now."

Then he looked at her, and suddenly his attention quickened, she had moved backward, and the light caught her full, a golden light, and she all pale gold, with streaks of vivid magenta. As if recognising something, he knit his brows, came quickly to within a couple of paces, taking her in anew, from her crimson parting to her crimson soles and the toe-rings of gold. He said nothing—but she realised his thoughts—he had seen and experienced others since he had left her, he had forgotten the standard of comparison, and now he found her uneclipsed after all.

She smiled, pleadingly, not her true smile.

"Tara Devi!" he exclaimed, in growing recollection of her, and in growing excitement—in a voice abruptly harsh and deep, "Tara Devi!"

Her smile fled as he took hold of her.

"No, no," she cried, resisting his embrace, "not here! Lead me out of this room. It is desecration. Lead me out! I have other rooms prepared for thee and me! Not here, not here, my lord!"

He laughed, burning with ardour and brilliant with the mockery of perilous things still half-believed.

He swept her up.

"Am I not thy lord and god?" he exclaimed. "Can I not better judge what is desecration? Where sooner redeem thee from the Lord Krishna, than here in this very room?"

Nothing availed.

CHAPTER XV

1932-1933

AMBITIONS AND LAURELS

RAEMALL went over the business of the State with Reolia and his brother, listening to all their findings with an attention that committed him to nothing. It was a curious sort of attention: entirely without heat, in some way impersonal. When the sittings with his brother and minister were done, there came sittings with his Council, and afterwards a session of the People's Council, which still looked very much like the Prince's Durbar. Then he went on an assize of justice through the State, dealing picturesquely and astutely with the cases brought—this was a function of rule that never palled on him. And by the time all this was over, it was April, and he had gathered the reins of power into his hands again.

He did not intend going to the Third Round Table Conference the Princes' position, under treaty and in the coming Federation, was defined: he himself had carried off all the honours he wished, and with the coming of Congress, the spirit of cooperation, which had genuinely excited him and which he in turn had inspired, was grown faint. He had done little ruling for two years.

The first change he made, was to resume the office of Diwan himself and suspend Partab of Reolia. Reolia knew very well that the office should be continued, in good hands if not his own, and he knew that this was his reward for witnessing his prince's unfulfilled outburst against the Mers. He therefore retired to his stronghold in a self-imposed exile and never waited on his sovereign again, on one pretext or another—sending his son, a man of thirty, to take his place whenever custom demanded. To cover his resumption of the office of Diwan, Raemall gave out that he now had his brother about his person. Sangram, however, had no solid post beyond the polo captaincy. He was entitled to it by his brilliance at the game, which was unaffected by his loss of an eye. But he knew quite well that this was work given him to keep him from more serious office. He accepted it, however, willingly. For since rejoining Raemall, he was dominated by a curious conviction that he must now remain by him if this were possible. If he were to take serious office it would not be possible for long.

With Sangram as captain of the teams Hamir Singh of Rajboland was without any appointment. He took the deposition with a grace that completely astonished every man of the teams and every minister. His partisans and hangers-on, prepared to make themselves exceedingly unpleasant, were put quite out of countenance. A few months later, the explanation was forthcoming. The Government produced a policy of overhauling and enlarging the forces allowed to the self-ruling States. And Hamir of Rajboland was appointed minister for the military forces of Surthawara.

It became clear that Raemall had certainly begun to change in some

way during his last trip to Europe. He was less touchy than before and at times exhibited a sort of blandness. This was a new thing and Sangram did not like it at all, for the old touchiness and the old rages all originated in the fact that Raemall was indulging his fancy against what he secretly knew to be right whereas this new smoothness made it look as if he had stifled that knowledge.

He prepared to put through various measures in the State, good in themselves—such as the furthering of the wood-carving industry among the Mers, the institution of the fair at Jalankar as a yearly trade-measure, and more substantial education of village self-government—but all with a certain casual superficiality which was neither interest nor honest neglect.

In April, however, three strangers arrived in the State and it was soon apparent where Raemall's enthusiasm of the moment lay.

The first two, who arrived together, were taken down to Hastina in a party with Sangram, Rajboland, and two others—they were air-field engineers. Hastina lay about twenty-five miles from Meerapur, beyond the last range of hills, a waste tract on the edge of the desert, capable of cultivation only about once in five years or so when the rains were abnormally heavy. Nevertheless it was not sand, and with the construction of tanks for water, Raemall thought some part of the region could serve as an air-field. There was no flat land nearer than Hastina which was lucky, or the history of the *ramna* at Jalankar might have repeated itself, with Rajputs and Jat farmers for the Mers and good fields for the jungle uplands and that would have been a different story indeed.

The engineers agreed that there were possibilities. They reviewed the region—there were no roads, and the cars went across the waste of pebble and earth and thorn-bushes—and made a preliminary choice of sites, to come back and make a closer inspection the next day.

Raemall was at the peak of pleasure over this business. He had fallen completely in love with the air, with its attributes of speed and danger.

"In the autumn," he said, "after the rains, we shall have our private air-station—the first flying State in India—our own pilots under training—and when I go to Jandore to call in the afternoon, I shall fly over—one need not wait for the desert States to have their own fields, there's a good choice of fair landing. I mean to get a sizeable body of pilots together. Who knows! This peace won't last for ever. We shall be the pioneers of the Royal Indian Air Force."

Sangram made some demur about the State's ability to finance an air programme.

"My dear boy, this sort of thing ultimately pays for itself," replied his brother. "It's a service to India—long-term, I admit, but you can't expect short-term returns from everything."

The flying-field went ahead—the dressing of the selected site must be done before the rains, so that the rains should bind the surface. A host of coolies was drafted out to Hastina.

With April came also the third stranger, and this was a French architect. Hum Raemall took up to Jalankar. The architect had been somewhat surprised at the idea of tacking a wing in the French château style to the existing palace, and now that he saw the palace itself, he was even more surprised. But presently he was affected by the mood of capricious amusement with which Raemall planned this architectural freak, and once he was rid of the feelings of convention and responsibility, the architect saw that this was the chance of a life-time to commit a folly, and his imagination was fired.

"So I need not be strict?" he said. "I may originate, Highness? I may compromise and invent?"

"Invent, originate—that is exactly what I want," replied Raemall, "cast aside convention, compromise—but your result is to appear a French château—there are to be turrets and windows and doors and corridors and a stair like the stair of Chambord—all I exact is that it shall look French and be beautiful, however curious—and not too luxuriant in detail. Originate, originate."

"Very good," replied the Frenchman. "I am delighted. I will do honour to your liberality, Highness. Life does not often offer a man a holiday and a toy within his calling. I shall find inspiration To-morrow and for several days I will come here to sketch and study and then I will go up to the mountains as you suggest to work on the plans in the cool. I confess I find it already warm here."

"I will arrange for you to stay a few days in Delhi, where you can see the use Baker and Lutyens made of Indian detail in modern buildings. Lutyens is a classicist—he was not nearly so successful with the Viceroy's House as Baker with the Secretariat. I should prefer you to look at no Mogul architecture till after the work is done. It may spoil your sense of the Hindu. In spite of much mutual interplay, the Moslem is a style foreign in India. Later, I shall be delighted to arrange a tour for you."

The Frenchman, as it turned out, really had some touch of genius, and when Raemall went up to his Himalayan estate to see the first plans, he was keenly excited. Sangram, apprehensive as he was at the expense in view, also saw that those plans represented a real thing. Jalankar Palace itself was an achievement of beauty—"when it falls to ruin, people will flock from everywhere to see it, it will be famed as the 1932 version of the palace Rajah Bhim Singh built for Padmuni," Raemall used to say)—and this curious addition was going to be no less beautiful. The plans showed a slender dignity, of French outline, but Indian detail everywhere integrated in it—in the grilles, the lintels, the balusters, the pillarets, the window-arches. The architect himself was full of happy enthusiasm, and the call to create had released the power to do so.

"People will flock from everywhere to see this as soon as the slates are on," Sangram observed, in sarcastic admiration, "and it

will be famed as the Maharajah Raemall Singh's salute to Mlle. Printemps."

With the coming of the cold weather, the air-field at Hastina was ready the army of coolies was re-organised and set to work on the foundations of the French wing at Jalankar

Raemall spent a good deal of time going to Delhi and Bombay, and finally, in October, there came a shipment of four light aeroplanes with a staff of mechanics These came up to Delhi where the machines were assembled, and then on a great day the four aircraft were piloted to Surthawara and descended upon Hastina The mail route lay across the northern corner of the State, so an aircraft was not a total innovation but the State had been in a mounting fever and there was a great crowd bivouacking down at Hastina When their Maharajah climbed into one of the four machines and flew it himself, there was a yell and handclapping not content with flying it, Raemall indulged in fancy sweeps and turns and rolls till even Sangram below was sick with apprehension: finally he came down with a perfect landing

The scheme for training pilots went ahead under the European mechanics, who were out on a six-months contract A dozen young men like Rajboland were taken, and three dozen Rajputs of less exalted station, and certain Jats who showed proficiency a ground staff was recruited from among chauffeurs and 'bus drivers in the State, and twelve Sikh mechanics taken on, for the Sikhs have a remarkable flair for the internal-combustion engine A guard had to be set and the hangars were of iron and well secured for the hill Mers were wild with curiosity and hung about perpetually, to see what they could pilfer of the marvel any tool left out by night was gone in the morning, and had any machine been left out at night, that too would have been gone by morning, leaving not a rivet nor a thread behind

Raemall's ultimate plan was to set up a flying-school for part of Northern India

At first he was at the air-field every day, and it was at this time, down in that deserted barren country, that he made a fortuitous beginning with a form of sport that became a standing favourite and this was the shooting of deer from the car Down here, on the sparse tufts of grass and low bushes, the deer from the hills used to graze, too shy to venture over the ranges into civilised parts. Raemall, spying them far off and below him from the upper road, would, once he was down, drive his Rolls-Royce off the track, and with his gun across his lap, career over the stony waste at sixty or seventy miles an hour he would start the game, and as soon as he was within range, fix the accelerator, seize the gun, stand up with the steering wheel jammed between his thighs, and hurtle at full speed after the quarry, shooting as he went The *chinkara*, which there abounded, is the fleetest of all gazelles, and scarcely to be taken at all. This sort of chase became popular among the blades about the prince, and he found one or two fellow-rulers who took kindly to it, including the redoubtable

Jandrore, who was one of the crack shots of India, and who came over for the first flying gymkhana. But, in that pebbly and undulating region, it was certainly an excessively dangerous pursuit, and entirely terrifying to anyone in the back seat—and there were not a few who preferred to say they seldom drove a car. Sangram liked it as much as Raemall did, and once or twice drove and shot himself, and brought down his quarry—but the pace was too hard for his handicap, and he was most often a passenger beside his brother.

He also learned to fly, and became a good pilot. He did not tempt fate habitually, as Raemall did, who looked for the same excitement in flying as he got out of his *chinkara* chases, hedge-hopping recklessly along the peaks, for example; but still he could not resist an occasional fling, and at any rate mastered all the more insecure performances. His pleasure, however, was never without alloy—for as often as he looked down upon the silvery desert stretching to the north-west horizon on the one hand, and the prickling flat peaks and narrow green valleys of Surthawara State on the other—or as often as he inspected the singular and beautiful walls growing out of the ground up at Jalankar—so often did he catch a glimpse of the still hidden face of ruin.

In addition to the activities of Jalankar and Hastina and the breeding of the racing string and the preliminary entries, there was the re-organisation of the polo-teams. A new generation of horsemen had arisen, and Raemall, with other and yet more ambitious schemes in his head, which however he revealed to no one, set Sangram to comb out the clans. All the chiefs of clans were required to send in their quota of horse, as in the old days, to be tried out on the great field at Meerapur. In addition—the new military scheme necessitating it—they were required to train a contingent of foot, which Rajboland was due to inspect later. Raemall gave to both these measures a feudal shape, and men began to say that the old times were coming again—for the feudal chiefs of Rajasthan had till a hundred years ago always done service with a quota of horse and foot in proportion to the State-assessed revenue of their holding.

“Well, well,” said Raemall to Rajboland, with bitterness and satire, “one day, perhaps, the man who is then on my *gadi* will demand his service of horse—but not for polo—and his service of foot—but not for a miniature gendarmerie.”

“Why do not you,” replied Rajboland, “demand a service of suitable men to train as pilots? They will be wanted—one sees the next war coming. I think the chiefs would be interested.”

Raemall glanced at his favourite with appreciation, his quick mind ransacking the notion.

Rajboland's idea was put into effect, unofficially, since the practice of feudal service had largely lapsed, existing only in the form of personal attendance by the greater chiefs on set festivals and occasions, and spells of personal attendance by the lesser vassals. On the whole, long peace was degenerating the land-holding Rajputs. They could

only while away the time in pleasure or gaming or hunting. all were like their master, but with less to do—long sloth, interspersed with bouts of sport that had lost its purpose of keeping them in trim for the day of the enemy

As for the position of the Raj in all this, it was difficult. The adventure into flying was a desirable thing—so was the furbishing up and enlarging of the forces—the polo was an extravagance, but far preferable to the—in the East—equally expensive course of lethargy. Resources are at least better wasted on hardihood than on luxury. It fell to Mr. Adams to discuss finance with His Highness—difficult, in spite of His Highness's affability, because His Highness managed his own finance and was not expansive on the subject. No one knew for certain (except Sangram and Partab of Reolia, and they were silent) how the State stood.

"You must realise, Mr. Adams, that you are dealing with living mediævals," said Raemall, with an irony lost on Mr. Adams. "I am a clan chief, a sort of patriarch, and responsible for my vassals. We are warriors without a war. I was too young to organise our effort for the last. I have to spend money on programmes to keep my vassals from the corruption of ease. I set a tone and a standard. Also I must lay out money against the future, and the return one cannot see at once—for instance, next year I propose to terrace and to blast cisterns in the steep lands of the Kishora region. It is fertile soil and will support a large population once water is attained—then I will have gardens for quinces and guavas, oranges and pomegranates and melons and the golden plantain, and a trade will set up, for no realm hereabouts can boast a range of hills of that aspect. I believe that even the Afghan grape might be grown. I am taking expert advice, both as to the gardens and the engineering—and I look ultimately to markets in the States on my borders and in Delhi. But the wells will cost lakhs of rupees, Mr. Adams, and I shall need twelve wells, I calculate—if I must raise a loan for this, I must raise it on my own credit with bankers who understand my country—and I must take leave for a free hand in the negotiating of my loans."

This was the first Mr. Adams had heard of the Kishora scheme, though Raemall had for years harboured a vague plan for fruit-gardens, dating from his visit to Kashmir on his tour. Kishora had become a definite scheme only since the inception of the air-field, and had been discovered to him as a possible site for the gardens only in the course of a tiger-stalk based from a point on the hills some way to the southward of Hastina. There seemed to be a good deal of tiger in Kishora, which was remote and waterless, except when the rains tore down the steep slopes into a torrent that was dead almost as soon as the rains were over, and ran out into a salt-marsh in the desert. To irrigate Kishora with cisterns and *bunds* would rob no one of water. But when Raemall mentioned markets for his fruit, he omitted the first market in his mind, which was Meerapur and the Meerapur Palace.

In the new year, the Kishora scheme went ahead with a great im-

petus : no sooner had it risen up definite in Raemall's mind, than it had to find effect. He had no patience to put off a wish : what he wanted, that he must have at once

Sangram was bold enough to remonstrate with him, fearing how it would turn out . but knowing what he did of the situation, he could not reconcile it to his conscience to say nothing

Raemall was as genial to him as to the Resident

"Thy office is my polo, little brother," he said, "make me good teams, pick very sturdy ponies, and in Chait, when Phalgun and Holi are done, I will tell thee my plan of them " His eyes shone and snapped

"Now what is it, Raemallji ? " Sangram questioned him, filled with fresh apprehension "What new scheme hast thou ? I can see there is something fresh "

Raemall looked more pleased and secretive than before, but vouchsafed nothing

"Indeed I am afraid with all these undertakings," broke out Sangram "Why must thou engage on everything at once ? Before Jalankar is paid for, the new wing is begun before the *ramna* beyond Jalankar is grown, Kishora is begun before the militia is brought up to date, the pilot programme is begun one of these works every seven or eight years would tax us enough Undertaken all at once, none of them can be met "

Raemall laughed

"Youth and manhood flee away," he said, "thou shouldst know that, philosopher Or as the English say . Time and tide wait for no man . Nothing venture, nothing win "

"We shall become a money-lender's milch," protested Sangram, heated. "It will be years and years of paying off debts "

"Sanga, we see things differently," replied Raemall equably "For my part I see years of greater revenue—from Kishora for example, or from the Surthawara Stakes on the Surthawara course—and years of life in places made pleasanter What I can plan I can carry through Whatever the future, I shall shoulder it myself for," said he, "I see no immediate prospect of my demise "

Sangram had to laugh . there was no blemish of age in his brother But he was not satisfied, or happy such bland good-humour met him What had Raemall done with himself on that second visit to Europe ? Where was the passionate and rebellious man whom one could understand ? Who was this smooth alien to Rajput character ? He was inaccessible : he stood before you and listened to observations that he would never have brooked before he could not be touched

Sangram was not the only one who was unhappy Tara Devi was beginning to know the meaning of the word, and more painfully Raemall was somehow out of her reach too she felt that she could touch, and he would not feel , she could call, and his ear would not catch her note He did not neglect her he took her to the opening

of the field at Hastina, before the multitude the distant Maharani was seen to enter his machine, and he took pleasure in her pleasure at the experience he took her tiger-shooting in Kishora, and was delighted at her prowess he talked to her of his scheme for wells and terraces and fruit gardens She was down at Hastina again for the flying gymkhana of the first batch of pilots he took notice of her opinion when the horsemen were tried out on the *maidan* above Meerapur.

But it was all quite different, fatally different He had never been physically faithful to her, chastity is enjoined and desired, but in practice scarcely expected of the Hindu husband, and the greater his wealth or station, the more improbable it becomes The Raptus have long cast aside their original strict good faith in marriage Tara Devi had brought with her the usual train of girls, and several of these he had taken for his pleasure, and the rest were married to the household *golas* from time to time, generally in the course of some feast with his favourites or intimates, he had taken other women and sometimes he fell into his early lusty ways and debauched but none of them had become a habit, none had stayed, they were not part of his life or hers, they were no more than passing hunger satisfied afield or in a strange house It was in her that he had concentrated all his passion and romance and affection they were one another and there was fire in their hearts

Now it was changed They were two, not one, and in him the fire looked to burn as fiercely as before, but was somehow a cooler fire. He went after other women, casually and experimentally but he came to her no less She felt that he viewed her from outside he was no longer in her and of her While she was living in austerity and penance, what had he been doing in Europe? What courses had he taken? What had he done, to be so changed? She could excite and please and interest him, but she could not touch him She was no longer the only one to him she was the unmatched one

And the god Krishna did not hearken

There was one other person who acutely felt this change in Raemall this was his mother, Krishna Lal, and she was exasperated by it He waited on her regularly still, but now much more infrequently She disapproved of his air-programme excessively and it took so much redemning with the gods that she passed beyond the satisfaction of doing pious acts to save others, into a state of perpetual annoyance. She could not abandon her character at this stage, but the air-programme created more of a religious nuisance in her life than she could face with fortitude It must not be imagined that Krishna Lal had any real idea of herself or the springs and workings of her actions She was only aware of the upshot, which was an urge to talk clearly to her son about his lack of religion.

And she, too, found that he was deaf to her reproaches and undisturbed by her spiritual prognostications She could still irritate him,

but she could not anger him. His recusance had not been defeat : his indifference was.

The second half of March brought in the month of Chait the riot of Holi was over, and Sangram was aware of the coming women's festival of Sitala, the goddess who protects children always at this time his mind was on his mother, whose memory he preserved tender and undimmed Chait is a pleasant month the later bright half opens with the Phuldola, the festival of flowers, when all is wreaths and garlands and the girls and women go out into groves and gardens and play then there is the festival of Ganggor, when the golden image of Gauri is taken from her temple by maidens in a great procession and her feet are bathed in the lake-water—the only major festival in which men have no part, the only great festival at which Raemall, as head and high priest of his State, had no office to perform

"Well," exclaimed Raemall, coming on his brother after the concluding ceremonies of Holi, when servants bring gifts and do obeisance to their masters on the first morning of Chait, "Chait is in, Sanga "

"Chait is in," echoed Sangram, and the name Sitala rose in his mind.

"And what was I going to tell you in Chait, Sanga ?"

"To tell me ?" replied Sangram, jerked out of his reflection, and a train of other associations invading him, "in Chait—yes—you were going to tell me a new scheme apropos of the polo "

Both the re-constituted teams had played a victorious Indian season that winter master and captain and men were alike in high feather

"Now I will tell you," said Raemall "Now please consider that the hands have been thrown up and the protest uttered and the reproaches duly registered I have an even better team this year than the first team I took to the Challenge eight years ago I am very proud of it and of you Every arrangement is made Now guess No ? Our fixtures for the summer are the Opens at Hurlingham and Ranelagh "

Sangram had no comment at all to offer

Raemall laughed at his expression

"They all go by sea," he said, "but we fly—you and I and Rajboland And the Maharam Probably I will ask you to bring her home, I may stay and keep Rajboland with me to do a little business I don't know it will depend on how we find the horses I have in mind to sell and to buy We shall be there for the great races again come now, don't pretend you take no pleasure in racing, Sanga You're a horse-lover and a gambler like the rest of us I know another word for philosopher, old hypocrite "

So Hurlingham and Ranelagh it was, and again the classics of the English turf again the ancient thrill of the sacred horse sent their blood racing and the heavy staking intoxicated their wits—this time a greater band of them, for Surthawara brought both teams and some

of the veterans of his earlier triumph - and by their undertaking and their greater number, they were the more excited. The Surthawara teams became front-page news and their comings and goings in public places were to an accompaniment of camera-clickings. Raemall enjoyed the public acclaim as an incidental - it was not the thing he now sought. Tara Devi was mortified to see her face vulgarised on a hundred illustrated sheets and her features and dress the subject of pavement gossip.

They won the coveted laurels. they could consider the world-honours of polo now theirs. It was done. it was over. hereafter could only be variations and repetitions.

Surthawara and Rajboland and two others stayed behind, with Bikramajit of Dol, since horseflesh and horse-passages were in question. The others all returned by boat, Tara Devi in her brother-in-law's care.

This in itself was a curious arrangement, and Sangram had said as much to Raemall - who only replied that this remaining programme would be all coming and going and dashing up and down to stables, in sum, an unsuitable existence in which to have a woman in tow.

Sangram had misgivings. He had noticed that Raemall appeared to know a number of people he had not known before - people belonging to the rich cosmopolitans who gyrate between the capitals of Europe and the Riviera, moving north for the summer races of Paris and England. He also noticed that Raemall kept a certain distance from these people and their English equivalents. Finally, he noticed that this distance amounted to the fact that he did not wish to make them free of Tara Devi. His attitude to Tara Devi was different from what it had been over here two years ago - then he was proud to show her, there was almost an innocence in his exhibition of her - but now he knew people whom he must keep from her.

Moreover, Sangram did not think that the proposed horse-transactions would take the time Raemall billed them to take. He recalled an incident at Ascot, when a woman in a knot of fashionable people had caught sight of Raemall over her shoulder, and tapping her escort's arm, had exclaimed in excitement, "Look, George, here's our——" and then, turning further, had been struck by Raemall's stare of non-recognition in the same moment that she saw his wife and brother as well. She turned away, exclaiming in her high insolent voice, "What a gaffe! I thought it was one of old Sohrab's crowd!" and added in a volley of laughter, "my dears, it's some Eastern potentate with wife and suite!"

Sangram thought he knew her, and soon identified her and her clique - a certain set very highly placed in English society, exclusive, scandalous and wealthy people who lived wildly and would try anything for a new sensation from tarpon-fishing to the latest negro dance, from prize-fighters to—Sangram guessed—potentates.

Bikramajit was the first back, with the horses. Sangram met him

in Bombay The horses were let down by cranes, braced under their bellies, waving their legs in the air like beetles on a cotton-thread

"Poor children," said Bikramajit, laughing gently at this discomfiture of the beauty of the horse

"That's a little jewel," said Sangram, as the horse came to earth and the *saises* leaped to release her "Did you do anything beyond buying horses? Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Oh yes—theatres and dancings and dinings—No, I did not like it"

"You did not like it, Bikram?"

Bikramajit glanced sharply at Sangram, then his features became expressionless He had answered with absent-minded but positive sincerity Now he shrugged his shoulders and said indifferently, "I did not go with them much, Maharaj my business was the horses"

CHAPTER XVI

1933

SONLESSNESS

RAEMALL came back later, by air Of his companions, one was not well, one was in a state of lassitude, Raemall appeared jaded only Rajboland, hard-bitten and hawkish, was himself

It was the first time Sangram had ever seen his brother in anything but excellent condition At their first encounter, Raemall had flashed observation on his junior—then it was effaced with the smile of greeting: but it was as if Raemall had said, "Does he notice?" He was in a curious mood there was some secret understanding of amusement between him and his arrogant favourite there was also an undercurrent of irritation against some other thing

Sangram, with his knowledge of Europe, made his guess He guessed that when Raemall, having packed his wife home, was free and ready to take up his cosmopolitans and his aristocratic exclusives again, it was to find resentment barring their door They were people who, under the show of convention, had a commonwealth of vice of all sorts. they could not understand that to a Hindu with his wife, they were beyond the pale Perhaps (thought Sangram) these eminent people had not realised that to the Rajputs they were a conveniently high class of pumps, peddlers, panderers, procuresses and prostitutes

Raemall himself opened the subject of his condition, presumably he felt worse than he seemed and considered it unconcealable

"It is no joke," he said, "flying back in the teeth of the monsoon Once we dropped three thousand feet and once we iced up and once I saw lightning crackle on the wings I did not realise the air was as solid as the sea Ackh-ackh, a bad passage"

"You are certainly not well," agreed Sangram, "if you had arrived

in England so, I should have listed your substitute to play in my team ”

Raemall looked at him, half-annoyed, but seeing that Sangram's censure was softened by teasing, he laughed

“ I did a great deal besides trade horses,” he observed suddenly, in English “ Oh yes Europe can be a perpetual Holi to one Orgies catered for at an effective distance from home Ha, they expect it of us. We are all Midases to them wild stallions from the steppes of Asia's hinterland with an exciting tendency to lapse into barbarism, like old Theebaw. The chap you're talking to may have had ten men's eyes put out in front of him, who knows ! He's an Oriental ! They are seedy people Well, we showed them a clean set of hooves on their own course ! ”

He was talking in his vein of bland detachment as though he were discussing the behaviour of figures in a news-column

“ We have enough corruption of our own to rot us,” said Sangram with the heat of genuine feeling “ I see no sense in taking on the challenge of European corruption as well There's nothing sacred left in the lives of certain of them thank God there is in ours You are—what's their slang?—you are going off the rails, Raemallji ”

But it was as if he were calling, and Raemall could not catch his note

He looked at him smiling, and said, “ I'm afraid Rajboland is not what you would designate good for me He is steel,” he added, reflectively, “ tougher than the steel of Sirohi ”

“ Surely you are not subject to his influence,” rejoined Sangram, “ or subject to any challenge of his ? ”

Raemall's smile deepened. Being just as acute as his brother, and much more practised in playing men by flattery, he saw Sangram's intention perfectly clearly

“ He amuses me,” he said “ The others are—even the boldest—afraid of me, they study me, I am the master Rajboland has no master ”

“ Has he not ? and does he not study you ? I would say that he divined your next extravagance before you had come to it, he helped define it, and then he made it appear more reasonable to you than you knew or hoped it to be Is not this to study a master ? ”

“ For example ? ”

“ For example, the candidates for air-pilots to be sent in by the chiefs, on the basis of the old quota for service ”

“ You are right —By the way, I have another six 'planes coming — Well, I know it in him But I enjoy his acumen He is good company I enjoy your absolute sense too, and I am very fond of your company, Sanga But I am not under his influence I see him very clearly ! Nor am I under yours ”

He laughed, with a combination of insolence and affection, and went down to the stables and kennels

Sangram was left to think over their conversation Such a conversation, in such a tenor of his own side, would once have been

impossible without violent explosion Since when had Raemall mastered this technique or trick of analysis and acknowledgment, that allowed him to countenance his faults as if they were in another man ? He had divorced the good fraction of himself

After the rains, the six new aircraft from England arrived and alighted upon the airfield at Hastina the first contingents of future pilots reported for training this was a programme popular among the great feudatories, for it appealed to their feeling for the gallant and the spectacular It needed only a hint from the throne, and voluntary subscriptions were made to the programme

The rains had filled the first and still few tanks and wells for the Kishora region and the rest of the water roared down the yellow nullah to the salt-pan in the desert The engineers went to work again Coolies and a population were drafted, and the first gardens began to grow Rajboland was increasing the efficiency of the militia, and the prince planned to hold a review on the great *maidan*, making of it a popular holiday in the people's calendar

At Jalankar, the peculiar but lovely half-breed wing had risen like an enchantment from the steamy earth costly furniture came from France and England and now there was to be a garden in its shade, a compromise between the Persian geometrical stone-garden and the French knot-garden in coloured dwarf shrubs with a water-maze

"Persian I will allow to this extent," said Raemall, "doesn't the house of Chamunnar acknowledge perpetuation in one generation through the last princess of the Sassanian dynasty of Persia ? Who am I to disdain what Chamunnar has honoured ?"

"How long ago was that ?" asked the architect, "do you mean by Persians the Tartars of Timur, or the Parsi immigration ?"

Raemall, who was looking at himself in a glass, and reflecting that the type of feature prevalent among the higher Rajputs was certainly not unlike the Persian cast, or the Greek or Lombard Italian or even the bleached Northmen for the matter of that, turned to the man graciously He was fond of conversing with him, for it afforded him a chance to exercise his accomplishment in the French tongue

"Timur was not a Persian at all," he said, "and came to India as recently as 1400 A D as you reckon it The Parsis were a little earlier they came in the seventh century Chamunnar gave the Tartars and Turks no wives, though many of us did so, to our shame but none of us had wives of them The Sassanian princess was of the period of the Parsis' coming into India"

The Frenchman was struck by the arrogance of the prince, so great that it was without assertion

"You talk of the seventh century as if it were two or three generations ago, Highness," he said

"It is more than that," assented Raemall, smiling "The generations of my house I can recite to you back to the rule of Vikramaditya So too could my nobles and even many of my country Rajputs whom

you may despise as being farmers or shepherds or smiths. Before that, the generations are written in the Puranas. The old sacred books familiarise us with a high antiquity, two thousand years and more before your Christ. We Hindus look at the modern world down a very long vista. It is true that to us the Parsis are newcomers and such a thing as the Mogul Empire modern and the British suzerainty the dream of last night."

"Since you are a people so ancient and so persistent, I am amazed, Highness, if I may dare to say so, that you have had no empire in India since Asoka the Maurya and the Guptas."

The prince laughed. "Why are you so amazed?" he asked. "You have been with us a year or so. Have you not observed that caste divides? And where caste does not greatly divide, have you observed no jealousy?" Raemall's sarcastic candour overmastered him. "You will find nothing in Hindostan more united than the Rajputs," he said, laughing, "we are brothers and kin *ek bap ke betan*! Yet I am a true friend of no other ruler, and no other ruler of me. As a man—perhaps as a ruler, no either he has a position I despise or a prestige I covet. If we fight in one cause, we are reckless in emulation to the point of endangering our cause. My own court is a microcosm: it is riddled with jealousies; my nobles vie with one another. To unravel the intrigues is a pastime; intrigues are the cross-word puzzles of a prince. And since this is so with us Kshattriyas, are you amazed that we have no empire? When the bulwark and battle-axe burst into pieces, when the sword and the lance contend—are you amazed?"

He laughed, pleased with his exposition of his view.

The Frenchman, however, was not devoid of that wit and self-confidence which is the integrity of the commons of France. His quick dark eyes betrayed pleasure and amusement. He played with a seal that dangled from his watch-chain and said innocently, "What effect do the observations of the ethnologists and antiquarians have on your vista of four thousand years, Highness? Do they perhaps lie across it, like bars of light that break up a dim avenue? Twilight may permit one to imagine the impossible."

Surthawara, detected in the act of verbal posturing, glanced at him with sudden shrewd attention. Hitherto he had considered the little man merely as an instrument and as an ear. He liked him the better for his attack. He fell on the new argument with verve.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "aha, now you have me, my friend. For there is no shadow of doubt that we Western Rajputs and our own Brahmans are late-comers, perhaps scarcely two thousand years in the land, and of the same people as the Jats and the Sikhs and the Pathans and the Hunzas—all the non-Turks—though for several hundred years now we have married among the remnants of the older Kshattriyas of India, and the industrious bards and Brahmans have flatteringly built us bridges into that ancient world."

He paused, and then proceeded, satirical and clear-witted, the native brilliance of the French tongue lending a last polish to his remarks.

"If we claim the ancient Kshatriyas for our fathers, we claim Asoka and Vikramaditya and the Buddha himself," said he, "and also the less historical if more divine glories of Rama and Krishna and the ancestries of the Sun and the Moon. But if we claim those with whom we are clearly one race, we can claim the empires of Macedonia and Parthia and the Goths and the Franks and all the peoples that have gone out from England to colonise new continents. You can see for yourself that we here to-day are in many ways the Europe of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and the Scotland of yesterday. You can see it in our strongholds and patronage and clan-discipline and baronies, in our diet and dress, in our games and poetry and epics and love of hazard and horses and hounds, and in our attitude to certain things we do not discuss with strangers but about which you no doubt have made your observations. In all these things we are knit with our Western branch but distinct from the bulk of India.—As you say, ethnology, art, social order, history and numismatics all confirm one another to this effect. All these facts are common knowledge. Yet on the one hand you have to-day the premier prince of our race claiming descent from a peacock's egg hatched by the Sun and on the other a man like the prince my brother, who has made a serious study of the historical evidence, forced to conclusions which I do not know whether to regard as repulsive and blasphemous, or as a promise of release. You should discuss it with him. According to my brother, we can choose the facts and advance into a great future or the fictions, and perish in cerecloths of mediaevalism. The position is interesting do you not find it so, sir? It is seldom that descendants are offered a choice of forebears. It is something of a paradox in nature."

He paused, again pleased with the frankness and clarity of his statement and the purity of his French.

"Which parentage would you choose," he asked, "the older India or the story of Europe?"

"But naturally, I would choose Europe," replied the Frenchman with prompt lucidity, "even if it meant cousinship with the English and our Normans—which for me God be thanked it does not, for I am a Latin of Latins."

"My vanity and my indolence side, I think, with religion," observed Surthawara, "my wits and sense with the ethnologists. My sentiments—my sentiments there I am not sure. I am not sure. To-morrow we shall see."

He laughed again. Having concluded these minor pyrotechnics, he proceeded at once to his next whim.

"I have another task for you before I can allow you to go home to France," he said. "I have determined to be ultra-modern and have a cinema-house. I need it for my guests and the city people will be amused. A deep balcony, with seats, and a plaque saying 'Royal Box' but the ground floor will have only rows of low stools, since the people all squat and would only squat on seats."

"Why have anything in the parterre?" asked the architect "In France, in the great period, theatres had no seats one stood and walked."

"Perhaps," agreed Raemall, "but the cinema was invented with seats and it is altogether modern Let a modernity be modern even if it must be modified for the East"

The architect felt a sudden longing for the predictable and the comprehensible, for the limited and the bourgeois

The Maharani mother, not without trepidation, and yet with a twisted anticipation of pleasure, like a flagellant caressing his lash, decided that her religious duty again called her to reopen with her son the difficult question of his sonlessness Indeed this question was, to one of her now rigid orthodoxy, an imperative religious matter Her religious observances she considered not only as due in themselves but she increased them and added to all and each a certain gall and a certain unction for she reckoned to be buying off her son's manifold irreligion thus—a thought she sedulously put from her—acquiring yet further merit But no rites, observance, fasting nor prayer could create the desired child Primitive instinct and the intricacies of her religion alike dictated the overmastering need for a son An adopted son might be as efficacious as a true son from the religious point of view, but no mother of a fine man can delight in a stranger as she can delight in the flesh of her son's flesh

Krishna Lal Maharani's heart and mind, like mill-stones, by day and by night ground a never-varying grain her love of her son saw his faults—but these she ransomed and he stood redeemed in her eyes her bitterness for her daughter-in-law grew like a cancer Tara Devi had spirited him from her in competition with Tara Devi's beauty and charm of character the claims of her motherhood and authority were impotent Tara Devi was barren Her son must be won free of Tara Devi There must be another wife And if this unfruitful infatuation should continue to the neglect of that necessary other, there were further courses to be employed, courses leading down to fevers and to death Krishna Lal could contemplate with firmness a future dark with criminal works Was she not a mother?

Now turned sixty, and rapidly becoming an old woman, she awaited her son's next visit Her soft fatness was pendulous, and the black irises of her eyes, once so lustrous, had a pale opacity growing in them. She looked soft and oldish but her heart and mind ground continually, hard as millstones

When therefore the prince paid her one of his visits at the end of the rainy season, she waited till the commonplace of their talk was over, and then, with an appearance of gentle but firm concern, she began

"My son," she said, "there is that serious matter of which I must speak again with thee"

She paused

"Well?" said Raemall, "Speak on, O my mother"

She saw that he was in his new smoothness, and did not know whether to be glad or sorry at this

"Thou seest that I grow old," she said, "and soon my sorrow of widowhood will be over. Would God I could have climbed my lord's pyre and gone with him as his faithful *sati*! Twenty-five years have I lived in austerity, unwanted, unregarded, useless, desiring nothing of this world save one thing. My son, let me see this thing, grant me the one happiness before I die!"

Raemall stroked his moustache. He appeared quite calm.

"Speak on," he said.

"The Lord Krishna has not bent his ear to her prayers or to mine," said Krishna Lal. "Thou knowest the due things were offended in the very beginning. My son, it is two years since she and I went on pilgrimage to Him and no favour has been shown. Dear son, let me see my son's son. A son to rule after thee, to continue thy honours and glory, to be great in the field and in learning, to govern thy vassals, to do thee the last rites to speed thy soul from the pyre, to be thyself after thee. I pray thee, Raemallji, take now a second wife."

Raemall walked up the room and down again, still equable. Krishna Lal was thereby considerably amazed and obscurely disappointed of spiritual guerdon.

He returned and stood before her.

"It is as you say," he observed. "I have given the matter thought. If I seek a bride, I am minded to seek her of the house of Jandrore."

Krishna Lal's disappointment of a contest added acerbity to her scandalised protest.

"Jandrore! Jandrore truly has two marriageable daughters, but both gone in age, and modern women. They must be eighteen or nineteen years old already, and have shown their faces to the world."

"That is all true. I have even met the elder."

"My son, my son! Do not repeat folly!"

"Mother, I am resolving upon a second wife, but I will have no young zenana-bred child. You have your chief desire, let be. Once I have ascertained the position, I will leave it all to the priests."

Krishna Lal pleaded vigorously for an orthodox proceeding and choice, but it was no good. and throughout her harrying, Raemall preserved his good humour, and this even when the arrows of her criticism flew upon Tara Devi herself.

At length she gave up, astonished at her son's phlegm, and dismayed, and vexed, as she slowly realised that she had done no more than confirm what he had already undertaken in his mind. She changed her ground.

"My son," she said, "I know this will be painful news for her, and it will be difficult for thee to inform her of thy resolve, because of the love between you. If thou wilt, I will undertake the office."

Raemall glanced at his mother, and for a moment it seemed as if he were indifferent enough to leave it to her. then he smiled, a mocking and perceiving smile.

“ I will do it myself,” said he.

He stood for a moment and looked at her with detached probing, as a scientist inspects the specimen pinned on his bench. So cold and curious was he, that he voiced a thought he did not know he harboured.

“ Maharam, my mother,” he said, “ have you observed that there is no child of mine whatever about the palaces ? Is it so easy to judge that the fault lies with her ? All my youth I dissipated my manhood we gloried in it. You yourself gave me my first woman when I was fourteen ”

He smiled, for he saw that he had thrown his mother into a tumult of wounded indignation. He stroked his moustache and took his leave.

Krishna Lal was very peevish all that day, and rated her servants for nothing, and vented one squall of bad temper after another.

Raemall went down to the stables. His horses had always been his darlings, and now they were almost a fetish. His entries were becoming known in the Indian racing world, but his real strain was in the making. Recently his mare Manika had been mated by the great Pendred from England, and he went down almost every day to see how she did. Manika was half Arab, very beautiful and highly intelligent. He prized her more than any horse he had ever had.

There was a mango-tree outside the wall of the stable-yard, and in its shade there was generally a mob of children playing. With voices like sparrows, they fought and played in the dust. They were the children of the *saises* or palace guard, who all had their quarters round hereabouts. Among them were nearly always the two sons and two daughters of Bikramajit of Dol, whose house was not far off. They played Rajput games, such as Raemall himself had played, and their toys were sticks, and bits of rag, and bright-coloured fragments of china, or broken glass bangles, or striped china beads, and the unripe mangoes in season.

But to-day the little mob was not squabbling as usual round the tree, only two puppies tumbled in the dust at its foot, and half a dozen monkeys, with one or two babies, leaped and chattered in the boughs. The four children of Bikramajit squatted in the shade of the wall, by the arch, silent.

Seeing the prince, they rose and salaamed.

“ What is it ? ” said Raemall, “ have you all eaten green guavas ? Eh ? ” He touched the eldest boy’s cheek with his finger. “ Where’s thy father ? ”

They pointed inside.

He went in, thinking nothing of it.

There was no one about, except a groom snoozing in the hot saddlery room.

He went down the boxes.

He came to Manika’s box, and stopped short. The door was a few inches open, and inside stood Bikramajit of Dol, his forearms flung up against the mare’s shoulders, and his face buried upon them.

“ Bikram ! ” exclaimed Raemall, snatching the door open, “ what

is it? Is she sick?" His eyes were like daggers, and his calm vanished

Bikram started round, and saluted, and turned away

"No, she is not sick," he said; "nothing has happened."

Relieved of that fear, Raemall realised that Bikramajit had turned his back on him. Astonished and offended, he caught him by the shoulder and jerked him round

"What——" he began, and stopped short "Bikram," he exclaimed, "thou weepest. What is it? What is it?"

He let him go, and the younger man turned away again

"It is no matter," he said

Raemall remembered the children

"Bikram," he exclaimed again, "we are brothers, our houses are as sisters. What is it? Is thy father dead? No? Is she ill?"

"Ill and not ill," Bikramajit answered, in a low husky voice

"Has a son been born to thee and died?"

"Not a son"

"A daughter?"

"A daughter"

"Living?"

"She is now dead"

Raemall suddenly saw the thing. There were two daughters already at the gate out there

"It is the second time," muttered Bikramajit, and added, "she is brought very low"

Raemall knew him for a man very tender-hearted towards his wife and children. It falls to the father to still the new-born child. And it was the second time

"Bikram," exclaimed Raemall, in impetuous affection, putting his arm round the younger man's shoulders, "let it not happen again. We are brothers. I will dower them, I will charge myself to find thy future daughters husbands of proper standing. Let it not happen again. It is my word, I have said it. Go back to thy wife and tell her this"

He drew Bikramajit out of the loose-box and sent him away

Then he strolled back, concerned, reflective, and even as he strolled his expression changed from that vivid sympathy to a blankness, and through this to a dark frowning. Now that spear of truth, which he had aimed to his mother's hurt, flew back and struck deep into himself. He stopped at Manika's box, shutting the door, and staring at her.

Manika was in foal. There was again a mob of children under the mango-tree, the children of grooms and guards, pulling the two puppies about. Children in Rajboland's castle, and children in this man's house and that man's. Bikramajit of Dol had four children living, two of them sons. and two others, girls, killed at birth. more children than he could support in his caste and calling. There were children in the Palace, but not his children. the children of his father's illegitimates, and of servants, and of the house-bonds. There were many

children, children on every hand on every hand each multiplied in his kind but where were his children? Where was his son? His son?

His son?

He became ridden by that childish spectre his thoughts were secret, even from himself yet wherever he looked, life teemed and increased but there was no life of his creating It was like a pain Success, power, and glory were his but he made no living thing: this immortality was denied to him There was no son to perform the rites due to his soul when he should come to die he could adopt a son to this end before the world, he could not make one

Negotiations were put in hand to secure a daughter from the Maharajah of Jandrore Jandrore's daughters had been carefully reared in their own religion but they had also been taken travelling and had received a year's final schooling in England The Maharajah pleasurably contemplated Surthawara as a son-in-law his first girl, however, must be a first wife if Surthawara and his second girl the princess Padmavita could please one another, the match would delight him Surthawara should therefore visit him, and if all was well, her hand should be offered

Raemall had told his mother that he would himself inform Tara Devi of his intention, nor had he anticipated that it would cost him much but in spite of his mood of frustration, he found himself putting off the telling He began to feel bitter towards her he felt he was doing an ill thing by her, and he felt this more keenly than he had expected yet he cast the unkindness he did her, up against her, for it was her barrenness that drove him to give her a rival queen

Meanwhile arrangements for his early visit to Jandrore State went forward

To reveal his intention could no longer be put off but it was Tara Devi who broached the matter

"My lord," she said, sadly, "there is a thing of which we must talk Thou goest to Jandrore to hunt with him well, my lord the Lord Krishna has not hearkened and the prince has daughters educated, not old-fashioned if one should chance to please thee, I would for thy sake welcome her to be my sister"

Raemall turned and looked at her sharply but she knew nothing of his project

"Let not my affection keep thee sonless," she said, putting her palms together and bowing her head

Raemall was inwardly in a turmoil His old love of her woke poignant: how could he do this thing? He was angry with her for awaking that stabbing sweetness he must do the thing, he was partly committed and her voluntary permission made it painful to do

"Why in God's name," he said roughly, as anger, resentment, and

passion worked in him, "why in the name of God can I not have a son of thee! O Tara Devi, my wife, my wife!"

—But he did not say that his purpose had been already set

It was in the dawn that the white-painted coaches, embossed with gilt, drew across the high desert of Jandrore towards the capital. The sunrise laid a shell-rose across the sparkling hoar-frosted sand-hills, and discovered smoky vapours in the hollows. As the sun marched up the sky, the pockets of vapour dissolved and the hoar-frost was melted to a shining dew that deepened the tones of the golden sand. and before them lay a grey bright lake, its verge rimmed with white salt, but a curtain of silver must still hanging above it. Imperceptibly this vapour too began to dissolve, and pearly shapes glimmered through it till it thinned away and in the full morning sunlight were revealed the bastions of a walled city mirrored in the lake. This was the ancient stronghold of Sindarh.

Surthawara had been sitting at his state-room window staring moodily at the grey of frost and mist in this high cold desert. but now as the warm sun quickened, his spirits rose. his quest was a wife. he stood up, stretched, put off his wadded gown, cricked and rippled his muscles, and fell to furbishing himself.

Jandrore staged a great reception for his fellow-ruler. the State elephants, valued even above Rolls-Royces, were there. there was a great programme of princely pleasures planned, shoots and chases and polo. but in all this Jandrore observed a mean. He made this great show for a possible son-in-law. but he did not extravagante with European or Indian guests above once a year. His palace was distinguished but within reason. his city appointments sound and not only for show. his train of elephants and cars sufficient but not a parade, his gardens cool but not wasteful of water. He himself was at home a man of frugal habits and much industry. and he saw to it that his nobles performed their part under pain of resumption.

Behind the palace trellises were the watchful eyes of the women, overlooking nothing, of Padmavita and her elder sister Rampiyari, who was now betrothed to another prince, to become his first wife. The princess Padmavita saw nothing amiss with her suitor. indeed he was cast in the heroic mould. When Padmavita had seen enough, it came to a meeting. The talk was of Europe. her observations were well-informed and sensible, but she did not talk a great deal. She had a certain charm of character. She had spirit. Her complexion was somewhat dark. She was of a sturdy fertile stock. Except in this, thought Surthawara, she would not much compete with Tara Devi. She was even better pleased with the man she saw face to face than the man she had spied upon through the grilles. She had sooner be second wife to him, than first to any other prince. There were other meetings. she consented. a betrothal was concluded, there was holiday in Sindarh. next spring there would be the marriage in Ranthambor.

Surthawara, standing at his state-room window as the royal train drew out across the desert at midday, looked back over the glassy lake with its beaches of staring white, at the strong bastioned city hard-cut in the glare of noon - there was his bride, duly courted and won, a young woman with the joy of her promised groom in her eye. she was a pledge to his hope - looking back at the walled city, he twirled his moustaches and swaggered as he stood

At Christmas time, according to the Western calendar - on the first day of the dark half of the month of Pus, New Year's Day in the old Hindu calendar, the mare Manika foaled - Raemall made the foal a present to Tara Devi.

"This will be a great horse," he declared, pleased beyond anything, "his father is Pendred, and there is no better sire in England - Manika is the most beautiful mare in Hindustan - I make him a gift to the loveliest woman in India or Europe, I give him for a New Year's gift - Now name him, now name him, Maharani"

Tara Devi had gone down to the stables and standing in the special room given to Manika, spacious and fancifully appointed, she looked over the low fence - The foal was already a few days old and could stand - He was long-legged and very woolly-coated and of a most curious colour - for all his coat was of an ashy fairness and his curling mane and tail were the colour of unbleached linen - His head was beautiful - Tiring of his lanky tottering legs, he sat down in the clean straw in that attitude of regal grace peculiar to little horses - Manika bent her head and nosed him

Tara Devi was ravished - Weak and woolly and uncomprehending as he was, she saw that he was indeed the hoped for marvel - every youth-misshapen bone promised the famous horse to be

"Saptasva," she cried, "Saptasva, Saptasva"

Hearing her accent, Manika looked up at her as if with a second's recognition

Surthawara glanced round his friends and more intimate courtiers clustered behind, at Sangram, Bikramajit, Rajboland, and the rest - smiles broke out and the murmur went back and out among the grooms and beyond among the guards and servants and outward into the city, "The Maharani names him Saptasva - It is Saptasva, Saptasva"

Now Saptasva was the seven-headed horse of the Gods, who drew the war-chariot of Surya the god of the Sun, the legendary father of the Solar Rajputs

Presently they were driving back to the Palace, Surthawara at the wheel of his wife's damask-lined limousine - But as they went the pleasure of that naming fell away - Tara Devi glanced at him sideways round her scarf and saw that his face was set and his eyes fixed not merely on the road but on something far other and not of it

Pleasure fell from her too and she also gazed beyond the road

They were thrall in one thought

Manika had her foal of great promise, the foal Saptasva · but Tara Devi named no son to her lord

CHAPTER XVII

1934-1935

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

THE new year advanced at Hastina was activity, at Kishora wells were drilled, tanks blasted out, and the first gardens bloomed, at Jalankar the palace was furnished, the stone-garden completed, the knot-garden set, on the *maidan* above Meerapur Rajboland marshalled men . at Ranthambor, when the marriage-season was in, were again the procession, music and lights of a wedding It was not the tremendous *tamasha* of Tara Devi's wedding, for this was the daughter of a lesser house and a second wife

The princess Padmavita of Jandore was given her courts in the Palace and there she set up with her priests, her servants and her train of girls Tara Devi in due course received her, with kindness, not only because she shared her husband's hopes Padmavita, on seeing the first wife, recognised that however much her husband might mean in her life, she would never, even if she brought him seven sons, rank first in his Thus relations between the two women were curtailed by sadness on the one side and some sense of preclusion on the other Krishna Lal viewed her new daughter-in-law with mixed feelings here was no beauty further to relegate her to the background, yet no beauty to compete with Tara Devi either the girl was too educated and independent to fall under her dictation or to make cause with her this one too was chosen without Heaven's indication, still she was a vessel of hope to the queen-mother and of humiliation to the childless one

Sangram saw that there was no reason why he should dislike his brother's new wife, and many why he should like her yet he resented her unreasonably Also, for some reason, she put him forcibly in mind of the bride he had never taken, and who was growing older unfulfilled in a house in his mother's land By Hindu canon he was committing a sin for thus neglecting her his justification was, that though he was not virgin, he never had intercourse with women The girl's family had made many representations, which he had evaded on this ground so singular a state as celibacy commanded religious respect in that land of philtres and phalluses He could not bring himself to take to women All his life he had seen naked the workings of his brother's passions, the passions of anger, lust and ambition he knew himself also for a passionate man, and from his earliest boyhood he had determined to be master in his own house A great anger in his childhood had, as he saw it, cost him the sight of an eye, had he used

his wits and his heart, he could have vindicated his mother's honour and brought his brother under her influence no less—or so he thought. Early experiment with palace *golis* had given him a complete distaste for the pursuit in Raemall the same start had wakened appetite. He would take this wife, he told himself, when he felt he was master of himself—alternatively, he had for many years felt half-called to a life of ascetic retirement—a life remarkably inappropriate to one of his race and caste—but militant ascetics still existed in Chamunnar. He was waiting to see which way his life would turn—latterly he had realised that this meant he was expecting a turn in his brother's life. But he doubted if this one woman would succeed where Tara Devi and so many others had failed. He wondered if it were right for a barren man to risk inflicting his barrenness on a second wife. How this barrenness beset the high and mighty houses of India! The consideration of Padmavita, in some peculiar but powerful way, put him in mind of his unknown bride, woke his conscience, stirred his irresolution, roused his resentment.

Recognising that he was behaving unreasonably, he went out of his way to be civil and considerate to the new wife—to find only that his resentment grew.

This year marked the real beginning of Surthawara's racing entries. He had by now a fine racing stable and some youngsters bred in it, the future Surthawara strain—racing had to a considerable degree superseded his polo interest. In this year Sangram became impatient of his function as polo-captain, he had always known the post for a futile one, given him only to keep him in countenance since his brother gave him no serious office of State—but now its futility was more marked, for Raemall overruled Sangram in his choice of teams, keeping on veteran favourites who should have given way before fresh talent, and putting in immature young players for whom he had a fancy. The polo-teams became a secondary consideration. State affairs he neglected and relegated to officials—as the season advanced, he moved up and down northern India, attending all possible events, proceeding by rail, by road, and by air, to follow in person the fortunes of his entries. He betted heavily. He moved with a picked band, including Rajboland and Bikramajit—in all the major cities he consorted correctly with highly-placed Europeans and cavalrymen and was popular with the wives and in the clubs—while his dissipations were entirely Indian in scale and character and quite separate from his European amusements.

Sangram was with the teams—their paths crossed here and there.

At Delhi, at the end of the polo season, Sangram waited below to go on the field, he heard a very old lady say privately to a cavalry colonel, apparently her son, "You see, Teddy? It's begun. He isn't riding himself—been racing and debauching all over the place. A good third of them ought to be sacked. In a couple of years it'll be a team of favourites fouling to win. And to think he has had the honour of putting up three teams that might well have beaten your

father's best " She dropped her voice. " Ts, ts, there's his brother Nice chap. Sorry for him "

When Surthawara came back to the State, he returned with various additions in the shape of jockeys, horses, and women. The jockeys and horses were good and the women remarkably beautiful. They also were a sort of team with which he competed against others of his kind. Most were Indian dancing-women, but one was a Spaniard and one a French adventuress. Raemall's attention to matters of State was brief and superficial. His handling of the still-existing cabinet Council and the People's Council perfunctory and peremptory to a degree it had never been before. The pressing and in some cases threatening representations of contractors, firms, and bankers, Indian and European, he met with disregard, promises, plans and the imposition of new taxation. Sangram began to feel sick as he saw the future setting. The Resident began to be seriously perturbed. When he had accepted the appointment of Surthawara, it had been considered a reasonable post if no longer a sinecure. Now it looked decidedly different. He had a year and a half to run. Was there going to be a crash? Would he get out before the crash? When finally he got wind of the white women, the Spaniard and the Frenchwoman, Mr. Adams took fright.

By the time the hot weather and rains were over and the cold season came again, Raemall was a different man from what he had been even a year ago. He lived at a very hard pace. His life was a life of hunting, flying, and lavish hospitality. He pursued pleasure as hotly as the deer. He picked up and kept trains of bards, poets, actors, musicians, singers and dancers. At odd intervals he summarily ran off the business of rule. He shelved complaints except for an occasional exhibition of brilliant perspicacity. He was careless and full of laughter except where his stable was concerned and there he was like an eagle dropping on his prey dead as a stone.

Sangram remonstrated with increasing vehemence, and was met with affectionate mocking, but once Raemall broke back to something like his old temper, and rounding on his brother, exclaimed, " Let be, fool! You bore me! You bore me to exasperation! Keep from me if you cannot stop croaking! I'll do what I choose, as I choose, when and where I choose. When I've had enough I'll settle down and grow fat and puffy and be an object of admiration to fools again." He laughed, and then stopped and added rather blackly, " I am not joking. Keep from me if you can't make yourself agreeable."

Sangram was not the only person who bored him in his immediate circle. His new wife Padmavita bored him. She was not lovely, she was not witty. She did not conceive.

Early in the cold weather, Krishna Lal Maharam developed an internal disorder of a tolerably simple nature. But obstinately refusing medical help, she subjected herself to a protracted religious treatment consisting of the consumption of the Products of the Cow in pills or

draughts, of ritual ablutions with Ganges water, of vigil prayers and incantations, and even of a night spent, with precaution to her age and regard to her rank, at the foot of the image of the god Krishna in his shrine above the city.

Within three weeks she became gravely ill and feeling that she would not live, she sent for her son and addressed to him a final and comprehensive admonition, proceeding to a speech of self-denigration, describing all she had done and how vainly, seeing that even now there was no child ; and with a last estimation of her sin, her son's sin, her first daughter-in-law's sin and her second daughter-in-law's probable sin, and an injunction of what should be done if these sins were to be wiped out and the favour of the gods won at last, she forgave him all his unkindness and impieties towards herself, blessed him, and concluded with a prayer for male issue to him, mentioning parenthetically that she had overlooked the propitiation of no god and had left large sums to various temples to raise regular intercessions for this purpose

Some time after her son had left her, with difficulty restraining himself under the provocation of this death-bed masterpiece, she, exhausted by that supreme effort, was lifted to the earth and amid the chanting and wailing of her priests and assembled household made an admirable and sanctified end

Raemall had succeeded in parting from the dying woman without violent retort, at the cost of a very great effort he had lit the pyre and her ashes were scattered he performed his filial duties with virulence in his heart, for in his brain the words and sentences of her last speech hissed and twisted and glided and knotted like a nest of serpents The people, marking the change in his temper, observed with approval that he mourned truly and the growing criticism of their ruler was set back awhile as they ascribed to him in his sorrow some of the sanctity with which they beatified the memory of the notoriously pious Maharani They were far from guessing the dire nature of what they took to be his grief his rage of pride, his mortification, his loathing of his mother's sanctimoniousness, his secret fear lest her superstitions be truth, his blasphemous fury against the bare thought of such a truth, his hatred of her for forcing him even with her last speech into exasperation and resentment against her when he would gladly have contributed to a proper and past-obliterating parting first and last and all through, the raging of his pride

Whatever the servants and courtiers might think, his immediate family could be under no delusion as to whether this were grief or no. The new wife Padmavita was perplexed and frightened Tara Devi, though she had never discussed the queen-mother with the son, made her guess, and she too was frightened, for she knew that while his bitterness attacked the new wife and all the women he now kept about the palace, the sharp and heavy head of it bore against herself. Sangram imagined with some exactitude what must have occurred, and he was

more apprehensive than either of the wives. Intimates or favourites like Rajboland and Bikramajit of Dol found themselves fenced out from their lord - they watched, wary.

For a month this mood persisted, with every aggravation of the externals of mourning and a savage accentuation of all the forms of private indulgence. Raemall cut himself off from the field and the stable and the State. He had a hard head and however much he drank he was never drunk. Intoxication could give wings to his imagination but to his fury or his desire or his wit it gave an edge like the jag of a timber-saw.

Then, surprisingly, a curious resolution of this mood set in. By degrees the prince regained his equanimity and even at length something of his good humour. The change seemed to emanate from something in him which he shared with no one. He gradually resumed his offices outside the Palace, and resumed his affability towards his courtiers and subjects.

In particular, he resumed the company of his first wife and of his brother. He took one or the other or both with him on all possible occasions. He consulted them. He seemed to place reliance on them jointly, to draw them very close, to bind them to him. He was quite deliberately making one thing of the three of them. It was marked, but it did not seem insincere. Neither Sangram nor Tara Devi knew what to make of it. Each separately wondered, unable to discuss Raemall with the other. Such a oneness of their society should have made a happiness. Yet it did not. Brother and wife were uneasy, full of apprehensions undefined.

The year drew on through heat and rain.

It was in this year that the French wing of the palace at Jalankar was finished to the last detail. It had been ready before the rains came, and now in the uprush of growth, the gardens were ready too. As soon as was formally possible, Raemall moved the inner circle of his court up to Jalankar, to inaugurate the French wing, and in the privacy of the upper valley to remit upon himself the rigours of mourning. Up there, among the mountains and the animist Mers, he could hunt and revel. Down in the capital city, with its temples and its teeming orthodox population, he could not.

In the self-contained French wing were accommodated Tara Devi, his brother, Rajboland, Lunkaran, of Bhadana, Sangram's friend, and one or two other men. In the Indian palace were accommodated the princess Padmavita and her household, of too great consequence to be brought under the French roof. She occupied the central suites, entirely independent, as she was in Meerapur. Here also was Bikramajit with his family. The wife of Bikramajit was not one to take to a semi-European style, and the Indian palace was arranged to house many separate households, each having its own kitchen. In the far wing were the small separate households of a modified but still considerable retinue of singers, dancers, bards, poets, polo-players and

their hangers-on The Indian palace led an immemorial Indian life . in the French palace, life was on a European model

Raemall continued to live in close intimacy with his brother and wife, relegating even Rajboland outside that narrow circle Rajboland consorted with the other gentlemen in attendance, at a loss and secretly humiliated . but he put a good face on it, went hunting or played polo or tennis or billiards with his master when he was called upon to do so, and for the rest found amusement in permitted quarters in the greater palace, or drove himself down to Meerapur at breakneck speed in his Bentley to see to his business as military minister, to call on the Resident on some instruction from the prince, and to pleasure himself in his town-house with gambling and dancers before returning to the French palace But he, favourite minister and his master's right hand as he was, saw himself excluded he was puzzled and resentful

Thus the month of Karttika came in, and as Raemall knit himself and his wife and brother closer, they moved towards their first disaster

The dark half of the month was a week gone, when there happened an evening that Raemall and Sangram played billiards alone after dinner Rajboland and the gentlemen in attendance had been dismissed it was already late

Raemall, as Sangram made a long break, leaned against a french window, his hands folded on the point of his cue, looking across the great court at the distant wing of the Indian palace The night was a little cold the night-watchmen on the pavements sat huddled round their charcoal fires, smoking and gossiping the geometrical Persian stone-garden glimmered in the light of the stars and of the many bright windows and arches of the palace From the farthest wing came the noise of string-music, drums, sometimes in a little veering volley the tinkling of a dancing-girl's bells, and voices raised in piercing but distant song

"There go Rajboland and Prahar and some others," observed Raemall, "to dice in honour of Lakshmi I suppose"

Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth, to whom the month of Karttika is sacred all her devotees were working up through minor festivals to that loveliest celebration in India, Diwali, the Feast of Lamps

"And the son of Pabu is singing the 'Invitation to Lakshmi'," said Sangram, as a man's voice came floating over "Two hundred and thirty," he said, moving across to the score-board "Your play"

As the game proceeded, it was clear that Raemall could not win "You are not on your game at all," exclaimed Sangram, finally victorious "It's true I can win off you, but this is a walk-over pull yourself together! Let's play a return Or a game of chess?"

Raemall helped himself to a stiff whisky and soda

"I'm not on my game, no, quite true I'm not in the mood Chess—thank you I could not bring my mind to chess seeing that throw away a game of billiards" He was restless, perhaps excited he flung himself into a sofa "Sit down and have a drink," he said "I've been thinking things over since the Maharani my mother died"

He gave a mirthless, short laugh "I offended her deeply some time ago I . . . suggested that the absence of an heir might be due to the early start I was encouraged to make in those . . . ah . . . exercises Well, I've been thinking it over You and I . . . you and I . . . " He broke off "Strange that one man could have two such different sons you all reflection and restraint, I—the reverse" He rose, filled his glass again, and sat down again "How much better if you were the ruler Fate's decided that . . . I don't find this easy, Sanga Don't imagine it You can spare your comment It is not . . . not easy We can settle it by ourselves I am not the man to be bound by priests and conventions Ha! *Autres pays, autres mœurs* How much better if a son of yours should follow me We must think seriously of it, Sanga I . . . you owe it to the State I should be happier if I knew we had a son of our immediate house to follow"

Sangram sat silent and impassive, hardly touching his drink Raemall continued to talk in the same strain, of character, heritage, rule, the State, the family house and its obligations restless, disjointed, uneasy, refilling his glass, walking up and down the room, somehow like a tiger in a cage Sangram's heart began to beat, as it was borne in on him that he was watching a crisis in his brother a crisis that touched him nearly Was this the purpose of his brother's binding them together? How could it be? There was something in the drift of all the eddying monologue that he did not quite apprehend It was like a stringing of beads that belonged to one another, but he could not perceive the string. He would have said that it was an attack on himself pressing him to marry but Raemall never once said so

"Well," he said, "it is an urgent thing, Sanga, my dear To adopt a son . . . I have seen no boy I could want in any of the permitted families though I have not really considered the thing To adopt a son . . . no But a son of yours, I would take him for my own, little brother Are we not the sons of one father? Well," he broke off, finishing his glass, and suddenly turning over to a tone of casual naturalness, "they are quieter over there—how late is it? Quite late after twelve How long have we been at this? Why, I said we would go to her she expects us We must go"

India is a land of the siesta the day goes on into the night Tara Devi had not retired Her suite was the first floor, and her reception room a spacious and beautiful apartment running across the width of the forward end of the wing dominating the lake and its palace-island It was splendidly furnished as the night was chilly, a fire of logs burned in the great French Renaissance hearth the light twinkled and sparkled through three huge crystal chandeliers She was sitting on a great couch set at a distance across the fire at such an angle that she commanded the door, which was screened off by a Louis-Quinze screen with a glass top Her feet were up on the couch her silver-embroidered slippers lay on the floor and her soles were henna'ed crimson She was dressed in pale blue trimmed with primrose and

silver, in her hair a great yellow blossom found only in the jungle of the hills partly she glowed in firelight and partly she sparkled under the chandeliers Raemall did not wish her to wear the white of mourning in the evenings She was alone except for a blue Persian cat with eyes like yellow lanterns, a parting gift from the French architect she was humming to herself

Sangram was still disturbed by his brother's talk but Raemall seemed to have cast it off completely He was now in a delightfully expansive mood, intimate, full of charm and fancy He walked over to the windows facing south and lifted aside the curtains and the Venetian blinds behind them

"Lakshmi's moon," he said, "Lakshmi's moon, little and young, he has set, gone to bed early I will turn over my purse to him on the night of fullness The lake is a field of stars—There goes an owl"

"An owl, you saw an owl? Lakshmi's bird, that is lucky," exclaimed Tara Devi

"On the Dhanteras this month I will worship gold and silver like my merchant," said Raemall, coming back "Heaven knows I need the goddess's help in all my undertakings I'll have a thousand mace bought and laid out to regale her owls"

He brought out some cards and dice and let the cat go

"We don't need such a great light," he said, "those chandeliers are like having Diwali every night"

He switched out two of the three great lustres and set a table under softly shining standard lamp of Chinese crystal at the head of the couch Sangram fetched chairs, Tara Devi lay on the couch, and they turned for stakes of silver Surthawara rupees

Tara Devi won all the pool and then she lost it all again

"You're ruined," Raemall teased her, rattling the dice in his hand

"I'll play my rings!"

"They're gold We're playing silver"

"Very good My ear-rings they're diamond that's silver"

She lost them to Sangram

"Now you're ruined," said Raemall

"I'll play my diamond bracelet that's silver too"

She lost it to her husband with a sudden vagary of fortune, he won the pool and his brother's stakes and the ear-rings

He set back the table and stood up, sweeping together the stakes, turning the silver and stones flashing and jingling from hand to hand, finally tucking them into his sash

"Now I shall have the pleasure of giving them to you a second time at no cost," he laughed, addressing Tara Devi, "to-morrow, perhaps, you are a good wife to me! Lakshmi's owl was a true lucky omen—the thought of an order I meant to give Prahar I say good-night, and rest *absit omen*, as the Romans have it" He put up the palm of his hand, restraining Sangram, who was for coming too "Stay," said, turning at the screen, and the earlier edged excitement was

noticeably back on him, "remain with her, Sanga, take my place, I shall see you very early to-morrow, understand me, little brother"

The tall door closed

Sangram stood staring

There was silence.

Hearing a sharp movement, he turned

Tara Devi had started to her feet, her face the colour of ivory, her eyes wide, her attitude that of a deer poised for flight

At the sight, understanding swept like an eagle over Sangram

Every word his brother had spoken recurred to him in a single flash every manœuvre Every piece fell into place

His heart began to beat violently

He plunged for the door It was locked

He came back

"The other door," he said thickly "To what rooms——?"

"My apartments," she whispered

This floor was like the floors above and below a long passage on the inner side of the wing, a series of rooms opening on its length, all or nearly all intercommunicating

Tara Devi did not move

With a muttered word, Sangram abruptly left her He went through three rooms, her private chambers the third did not lead to a fourth there were no keys on the inner doors and all the passage doors were locked

His heart beat now more slowly and so heavily that he felt sick the blood seemed to clot in his brain and temples and throat presently he came back, halting at every step, and stood in the doorway, not raising his eyes

Tara Devi turned her head, but had not moved

At length he lifted his eyes, and at the sight of her defenceless beauty, a pandemonium of realisation and passion surged up in him Now—now he understood about himself, and his bride, and Padmavita now indeed he understood! And Tara Devi recognised what she saw, for her eyes stared yet more widely and she shrank back where she was

Sangram was unaware of what he did, so great was his masterless tumult but he smiled and laughed and came towards her, and was so suddenly like his brother in his smile and laughter, that Tara Devi started away in a panic

"Listen," he exclaimed, with a sort of brilliance of persuasion and triumph, "it is his wish, we are sons of one father he said——" and Sangram broke into a torrent in which persuasion was overwhelmed by a lover's ungoverned declaration He was drunk on fiery wine he rioted in reckless glory revelation and realisation blazed about him Before him Tara Devi burned and glowed in the coruscation of his love and desire He neither paused nor reflected it was as though the philosopher and amateur of wisdom had never been he had sighted his quarry, the hunt was up, he was after it, hot, unbridled, wild, and cruel

Tara Devi did not attempt to elude him it was hopeless he did

not even hear she broke into quiet and desperate weeping, flung herself on her knees, caught him by the ankles, and wept on his feet
"Spare me," she sobbed, "spare me, spare me, Sangram, O my brother"

Sangram tried to raise her, persuading and enticing her with terms he had never used or known before, half laughing, half triumphant, half tender, half brutal, seeing her only through the red and golden haze so burning was his vision of her, that he scarcely knew what she did - then as he began to perceive resistance, a tempest of laughter and masterful anger broke loose in him, but at length—at length sense began to pierce intoxication, the wild glorious tide spent its career, slowed, stood still, turned upon itself, little by little ebbed as words began to fail, he spoke her name twice, and he began to hear her silence, and understand what he was seeing

He stepped backwards, and retreated from her Pace by pace he recoiled, like a man whose feet labour in a quicksand

He sat down as far away as he could get, and took his head in his hands Horror engulfed him He went out on that fearful sea

After a very long time he looked up She was sitting at the far end of the couch, in the light of the one chandelier, her eyes fixed on him

He hid his face again How long passed he did not know it was longer still, a very long while indeed when he looked, she was still gazing at him, this time her eyes great with pity

He stared at her so spent and so haggard and for so very long, that he started up and came softly over to him

"Sanga," she exclaimed, "Sanga, poor Sanga, dear brother, forgive me"

He watched her come, almost apathetic, knowing the thing for unachievable but when she sank down beside him and embraced his knees and looked up at him with that intolerable sweetness and pity and above all when he felt her softness, he thrust her back violently and got to his feet, staring at her furiously

"Sanga!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "what have I done? mean nothing! Do not hate me!"

"Keep back!" he said "Keep off! keep back! Shut thyself away! but there are no keys—no keys If I block the door, I unblock

I cannot stay It is beyond me" He went to a window "Turn out the lights," he said, his hand on the curtains "Turn out the lights," he repeated when she did not move, "else men will know"

"Sanga!" she cried, coming to stop him, "it is thirty feet!"

"Keep back!" he exclaimed retreating "I cannot endure it Do not touch me Keep off Keep back, I say"

He was so furious and so violent in his manner, that she stumbled backward, tears blinding her He strode over to the door, and stood frowning

"Stand over there," he said "Do not stir. If I touch thee in the dark, I answer for nothing Draw the curtains again before thou dost nest on the light"

With his hand on the switches, he stood measuring the room and mapping the furniture. He shot a last look at her, as if he would never see her again, a look of hatred and hunger and love, and turned the lights out

There were hasty footsteps the drag of the curtains, the clatter of the blind, a window opening, stars a shadow standing for a moment against the dim balustrade, peering down movement in the growing starlight, a clearing of the shadow, a soft thud below

Then the distant challenge of the night-watchmen

Sangram found his brother alone in the billiard-room, drinking whisky and smoking cigarettes, the silver and diamond of his winnings piled among a litter of stubs

Raemall leaped to his feet

"What——?" he asked, and at the sight of his brother's sick and stony look, anger began to gather in his brow

"I had not understood," said Sangram, "I imagined my marriage was in question I am leaving the State, this instant I came to dismiss myself"

He stood staring at his brother, it was as if he spoke A Hindu wife is called the mother of her husband's younger brother both knew the name of that sin As he read the unspoken, Raemall grew livid with rage

"You insolent cur," he growled at last, "I ask of you a singular favour and I offer you an incomparable privilege" He bore slowly down on Sangram, menacing, the intention of death in him

Sangram visibly bit back vituperation

"Stay where you are," he commanded "You are my brother and my prince I will not raise my hand against you"

"Ha! coward," said Raemall but he was halted by his brother's black and absolute command Before that other anger, by its stillness so much greater than his own turbulence, he knew himself the lesser man

"Not—so—ill—matched," answered Sangram, a word at a time, "you are lucky there are no swords or firearms here, there will be no scandal I go I do not return"

He pulled the curtains aside, opened the long window, and stood a moment in the dark gash

He spoke for the last time, and his words shook him from head to foot

"May the gods forgive your infamous impiety," he said, and then, "lawless and infamous—both of us—both of us" Very low and rough, he added, "May they forgive me too"

He was gone

No previous fury was more than the spluttering of a match to the volcano of rage that now possessed Raemall, rage against his brother, rage against his wife As if there were an earthquake, he shuddered where he stood, and presently made off headlong to go to her but

halfway up the stone stair that was a copy of the stair of Chambord, he stood still reflected his features composed themselves to a devilish smoothness, he turned and came deliberately and coolly down he sent for Rajboland

The next day, Rajboland had much ado to keep his arrogance and his peacocking within limits inoffensive to his master
But Tara Devi was stricken

Diwali came, the Feast of Lights lights budded everywhere in the dusk and bloomed in the darkness Every parapet, every building, every branch and every root of every sacred tree, every cross-road, every temple and every wayside shrine and idol bloomed softly golden with a myriad wavering heart-shaped flames The lights bloomed more and more thickly, soft-spoken prayers to Lakshmi, goddess of silver and gold, of wealth and plenty for weeks the potters had fashioned fragile clay saucers and now the tiny *chiraghs* became the myriad calices of a golden blooming, and in the dark night a myriad soundless golden tongues prayed softly to the goddess Lakshmi. Lakshmi, Lakshmi, Lakshmi look on us ! Lakshmi Devi, Lakshmi hearken ! prayed the golden flames

Everywhere the flames and lights bloomed like fields of golden flowers, and all India bloomed with lights and awaited the moment of full moon

Everywhere was worship, worship in the temples, worship at shrines, every village offered lights and cornucopias of flowers and fruits to the goddess everywhere were fairs and pilgrimages and amid the advance of the golden flames they awaited the moment of full moon hymns rose everywhere and at the fairs the vendors sold fruit and cakes and sweetmeats sprinkled with silver and gold for this was the feast of Lakshmi, goddess of gold and silver, of plenty and of wealth

On the banks of the Ganges hosts of pilgrims awaited the moment of full moon, to plunge into the sacred waters and purge away sin and guilt, to worship the gods, to achieve heart's desire The moon rose and beamed abroad on the fairs and the multitudes of pilgrims and amid the staring radiance of her silver light the flowering flames flickered golden and belittled, no longer warming the darkness, but now the golden hearts in the flooding silver

And down on the Ganges at the holy places, on this bank and on the other too far away to see, in the moonlight, the pilgrims set companies of *chiraghs* on little rafts of rushes and lit them in the lee of willows in the bank and when they were well alight, they pushed off these companies of golden prayers and followed them down the bank, trusting them out when they eddied inshore, preventing the shipwreck of their frail barques of worship and prayer And happy the one whose raft of wavering lights drew out safely into the slow full current of the Ganges, rocking on the broad shining bosom of the holy ether, sailing down the silver flood in the moonlight, down towards

the holy moon, till the raft of little lights floated beyond the ken of the pilgrim, pinpricks of dwindling gold lost in the silver radiance

Many such a raft did Tara Devi see and not see as she sat in her enclosure at a very holy place on the river, awaiting the moment of full moon. She did not hear the lapping of the water, nor hubbub of the surging pilgrims, she did not hear the drums or the chanting or the winding of the sacred conch. She was stricken and dead in spirit, she had not come in quest of prosperity, she had come without state or pomp in a fashion as humble as might be, for time was short. The last ten miles she had walked in the dust, wearing the yellow robe. Now she sat in an enclosure for women of rank, waiting the moment of full moon, her only attendant a serving-woman who waited far up in the enclosure, in touch with the men on guard outside.

She sat for many hours, deaf to the din and blind to the gold and silver, her drowning soul crying for salvation, and the slow moon rose higher hour by hour, awaiting the moment of accomplishment. Higher hour by hour. O slow moon!

Tara Devi, wan in the cold light, lifted her face to the moon. O cleanse, serene Ones, holy Ones! O for cleansing from unspeakable defilement! O cleanse, heal, redeem, save. Rise, Lord Krishna, saviour of souls, rise, rise, bright Hari. The moment of accomplishment was coming, coming, she would watch the moon. The moon glittered on her eyeballs and shone on the wan uplifted face. Now the moment of fullness was come. Was come.

From the shadow of the matting fence, she slipped down into the tepid water. Soundlessly she went down into it, as did many another all the time all along the banks. Nevertheless it was not the moment when the astronomers' conches would blow all together and the people with a myriad shout plunge into the sacred river.

Tara Devi walked out into the flood, deeper and deeper. The soft arms of the Ganges enlaced her waist, her breast, her neck, her lips, her eyes, sweet to the lips, soft to the eyes rough with tears, ease to the heart defiled, and still she walked into the river.

Now the light was more dim. She looked up, and there high above her was the ceiling of moving water, sparkling a little, silver-green and dim, and on that surface overhead a little shadowy raft with a golden glow above it bobbed by riding on the current. She followed it with her eyes, and then she saw the moon, broad, beaming, full, the edges moving like water, rippling. Tara Devi lifted her arms to the moon above the Ganges flood, rising to the surface. She broke into the bright element of air. The silver face of the divinity smiled upon her, and he stooped down from the blue lotus of the sky.

On the next day Tara Devi was raised on her pyre, far down the bank, away from the holy spot. Her hair was combed and dressed and they put a flower in it, they painted the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet afresh, they painted the parting in her hair and renewed the mark on her brow and made her fresh with perfume. Her husband

was there, covered with heavy dust dust had churned up through the floorboards of the car, unquenchable ; dust deep over the axles brought it to a standstill on the pilgrims' road, and he had taken a nag from a wayside village

Now he thrust the brand into corners of the pyre, and as the flames crackled and the smoke rose, he saw for the last time the painted soles of her feet, the round arms, the high breasts, the matchless profile and the glossy hair the matchless profile sleeping among curtains of smoke

CHAPTER XVIII

1935-1936

SANJOGTA

SANGRAM drove through the night and the next morning arrived in Delhi Here he left the car in the town house of Surthawara and taking the train that happened to be standing in the first platform, he travelled north to Lahore He had changed his clothes and travelled third class, unattended, one of the mob there was nothing to know him by except the excellence of his barbering and the smoothness of his hands And those, thought he, will right themselves

At Lahore he bought a cotton quilt and walked in the bazaar, intending to put up in a serai but instead he wandered through the city, out past the civil lines, and finding himself in open country, he sat down under a large tree Night came, it grew cold, and like a coolie he wrapped himself in the wadded *resai* He did not sleep he thought, inexplicitly, by images and conceptions

He was filled, not with rage, nor with any excess, but with a still dejection

He thought of Raghudeva Rao, up at the shrine of Ganesha He could not go on from this pass by the counsel of any saint he must find his own way

He thought of himself going up into the forest when long ago his brother had banished him . righteously indignant, satisfied to take that impressive course, esteeming himself when anger duly fell away

He thought of his pretensions, spiritual and philosophical they were incapable at the test

I am, thought he, like a man who cuts off his right hand lest it steal, who rides his horses on hobbles

He thought of the luxury which he had owned or shared here he was in the night frost in a coolie's quilt it was more comfortable

He thought of himself as he had dabbled with the more reflective men of the State futile

He thought how once he had searched out half a truth and how easily he had forgotten that quest in trivial employments

He thought of Tara Devi, and of what he now knew, and was abased.

He thought of the unknown girl, and for the first time felt the wrong he did her.

He thought of the future, immediate and more distant - saw himself a recluse in the Himalayas, a recluse in the plains, a beggar, a monk, an exiled scholar in a quiet city house, in a quiet hill-house, a pilgrim in all of these, with and without the unknown girl who troubled him - but in each, and in respect of her, he saw himself approving himself

He was sickened - he pulled the quilt over his head

He could not escape himself

Where should he go, what should he do? Filthy as he now knew himself to be, the callings of butcher or sweeper could add nothing to his vileness. Nothing was now filth to him - he no longer looked down on life from the pre-eminence of the twice-born, he was a maggot in the carcase of corruption, abased beyond the imagination of abasement

Escape himself! In that nadir of self-revulsion he learned a meaning - how shall a man escape the Creator Who is in him and in Whom he is? How shall a man escape that offence, that grief, that everlasting demand? No pit, no peak, no desert, no mart, no ocean, no cranny can hide away a sinning man - he lives in the wound he has made in his God - he is it, and in it

In the dawn there were bells on the road, a mule-train going north. There was an Afghan horse-dealer with them. There was a loud altercation about the defection of one of the grooms. Sangram was taken on

Again the cold weather came, and with it Sangram came down with the horse-dealer from Persia and Afghanistan. His beard was rough and his hands were rough and his complexion tanned and roughened by the sun and cold of the passes and peaks that prop the canopy of the sky. He passed well among the Pathans and the Afghans - but in spite of the fact that he had altered the manner of his dress and the tying of his turban, down here in the plains he could be told for a Hindu Jat or a Rajput. Though he had been taken on by chance for a day's march, his expertness with horse-flesh had recommended him to the followers of the Prophet, and the horse-dealer had turned a blind eye to his idolatry and to his uncircumcision

Now he again sat in the yard of a serai in Lahore, squatting on the edge of the verandah, smoking a hookah, watching the chaff fly from animal-bedding and the embers glow in a charcoal bucket

Nine months he had spent in the Pamirs and in the mountains and deserts of Persia beyond, going down to the gulf of Persia, a rough life of simplicity and common cunning and danger - no life could be a greater contrast to the life of idiotic luxury, abject poverty, and artificial physical risk of Surthawara. What should the pattern of life be? The introduction of simplicity among the rulers, the contriving of prosperity among the impoverished, the harnessing of reckless

energy and courage to constructive work? Or was this hopeless? Was the Rajput and his Brahman an anachronism?

And even if there were still a purpose for Rajputs, what purpose could he have, a younger brother, lord of no hereditary fief, and self-exiled even from what his prince and custom granted him?

There remained only one course as to which he was clear. When he had served his hermit's penance as a horse-coper, when his purifications were done (for he had not lived by the rule of religion), he would approach Parbatsar for his bride. He made no doubt that if during all these years he had been a married man and a father living on his estate, that thing might well never have arisen. He did not wince from contemplation of the past. He saw it steadily, and bowed his head to the chastening of memory. He was done with himself.

So he sat, watching the floating dust and the drifting smoke, in his nostrils the acrid smell of burning cow-dung, when he became aware that someone had halted before him.

"Maharaj," came a whisper.

He glanced up sharply.

"Lunkaran Singh!" he exclaimed, breaking into a smile, starting up to take the other by both hands. "What brings thee? Sit. Smoke with me. How didst thou find me?"

"Can a man not find a sword in a load of cotton?" replied Lunkaran Singh, accepting the hookah.

"It is good to see a kinsman," said Sangram, taking in the tying of the turban and other appointments of his native land. He called him kin, but there were thirty generations between the houses. "Now tell me, what brings thee?"

"I come to join my lord," replied Lunkaran.

"To join me? in exile? wherefore?"

Lunkaran Singh of Bhadana hesitated.

"How is my brother?" asked Sangram.

"He is in health," replied the other guardedly.

Sangram was disquieted.

"And the ladies?"

"The first lady is dead. She died last year on the feast of Diwali."

Sangram was very still.

"Where do you lodge?" he said abruptly. "I have no room here, I am a peon with a horse-dealer. Let us go."

Bhadana was lodged in an Indian hostelry, having with him only two or three servants. Sangram changed into clothes of his own cut again, sending a servant down to the bazaar to instruct the horse-dealer to call here next day, for he had liked the man.

When they were alone, he commanded Lunkaran Singh to speak plainly.

"My lord," said he, "would that I had a different tale to tell. Since my lord himself left, and what followed, mischief has grown uncontrollably. There is no holding the prince whatever. The people have long been discontented, but now they openly murmur. He has

quarrelled unjustly and resumed the fiefs of this vassal and that, and they wander in exile and among many of those that are not dispossessed there is a mischievous spirit I do not know where it will end my lord knows we do not easily overturn a prince But there will be refusals of service on the one hand and undue demands and coercion on the other "

"All under the paralysis of the peace of the Raj How will that go, Lunkaran !—Will there not be a new Resident this winter ? who is appointed ? and what did Adams Sahib do in the situation ? "

"The Resident Sahib became very anxious, but his term was ending and he only protested But the prince was invited to Chamunnar where the Maharajah of Jandore was also visiting "

At that Sangram sat back and stroked the black beard he had not yet shaved off

"So," he said at length "Of that conference what is known ? "

"Nothing, my lord The princes were three days together A while thereafter the princess Padmavita went home to her father on a visit that is not yet over "

Sangram's jaw dropped He rose hastily and walked up and down the room He stopped abruptly in front of Bhadana and fixing him with an eye as keen and formidable as his brother's said, "So now I may expect a train of faithful future courtiers to attach themselves to me, eh ? Will Rajboland also come ? "

Lunkaran Singh flushed and his hand went to his sash

"My lord is not yet stationed so high that he may insult his servant's honour thus," he said, knitting his brows

"How many," demanded Sangram laughing, "have smelled me out and will run me to earth ? "

"No other, so far as I know "

"Yet it is not difficult to discover a sword—indeed a company of swords——"

"The lord of Rajboland at least will not come, for he is dead "

"Dead ? Dead ? How ? "

"It is said, that he raised his hand against the prince, and died by the hand of my lord's brother Nevertheless," added Lunkaran with stiff rancour, "if my lord takes my coming as the like of his coming, I will go from my lord "

Sangram laughed again, short and mirthlessly then he sighed

"Forgive me, Lunkaran," he said, "all those tidings are very ill to hear Well, we shall know when the stag is dead, for the vultures will flock in Surthawara, the Raj, the law, the priests, the chiefs and the chieftains I shall know when my stag is dead—Indeed thou comest to me in a good hour, for I am going into my mother's country to fetch my wife and though she is not of a great house, it will look better if I come with at least one man at my back And even were this not so, is not a friend in exile water in the desert ? "

So Sangram Singh of Surthawara and Lunkaran Singh of Bhadana

went down to the house of the Rao Birbal Singh of Parbatsar in the state of Doura

Parbatsar was an old-fashioned Rajput who lived on his not very extensive land. He welcomed the tardy son-in-law, but with much reserve for the sake of his tardiness. As Sangram's visit proceeded, however, this reserve was mitigated a little, partly because of the character of the prince, and partly because of certain representations proceeding from behind the grilles. Sangram made a clear statement of his position and permission was obtained from the ruler of Doura for him to take up a temporary residence in a small country house not far below the old fort of Parbatsar. Sangram felt curiously at home in the civil but crude life of Parbatsar. The house was closely allied to that of his mother, and sometimes there drifted over from the women's courts snatches of the country songs she used to sing.

It was not the marriage-season but there was no room for delay.

The marriage was as fine a show as the old chieftain could make it, bearing in mind that his son-in-law might well become a ruler, he was for going heavily into debt to do yet more lavishly, but Sangram determinedly restrained him, for luxury stank to him.

The preliminaries lasted two days. At dusk on the third day the marriage was solemnized, and in the dark a procession of music and torches conducted the bride and groom down the old hill-road to the house they were to occupy.

Sangram on his horse wondered, even more than how she looked, what the unknown girl in the red bridal *palki* was thinking. And the more he thought, the more uneasy he grew. She was twenty-eight years of age, old enough to be a grandmother. Tara Devi had died a year ago this season, aged twenty-nine.

When at last they were alone, facing each other in the saffron robes of marriage, he turned back her veils and fringes with increased apprehension and uneasiness. She was not frightened but then she had watched him unseen for half a moon. She was a well-made young woman, her face was pleasant and her eyes handsome.

"Sanjogta," he said, in the gratitude of relief.

"My lord," she replied, bowing her head, laying her hands palm to palm.

She saw that he wanted to do what she had done at her leisure. She therefore turned aside and unhurriedly removed the more inconvenient of her bridal trappings. Presently she turned back, and seeing him absorbed in an again uneasy inspection, she smiled faintly.

Sangram recognised in the slight smile the promise of what had not been in the Senior Maharani, nor in Krishna Lal Maharani. What was modified in Padmavita Maharani but what had shone in Tara Devi and in his mother Sitala.

"O Sanjogta," he said in impulsive contrition, "much hast thou to forgive in me. Had my mother lived, thou wouldst have come early to our house and been my friend. But I was left alone, and I fell in love with this idea and that idea and fancied myself a *rishi*, and yet I

was afraid of myself and all of it—I found—was a cover for something else . . . ”

He looked at her and the shadow of a smile passed over his features, a smile of utter weariness, and his glance fell away

“ Thus have I rendered barren the years of thy youth,” he said

“ My lord chides himself,” she replied.

He looked up again It was clear that she had not grown sour by growing older unmarried and as she was a country woman, the years had by no means spoiled her He was thankful, and he was troubled before her

Seeing which, and wishing only to lighten his sense of having transgressed, she said hesitating, “ We have heard of my lord’s way of life . since he did not see fit to use his servant, I have yet tried to be his companion in his way ”

Her words raised his true record to stand in accusation upon him Struck to the heart by such innocent fidelity, he could find no words he turned from her Sanjogta, thinking she had trespassed, called up her courage and spoke again

“ My lord will find his slave very simple,” she said, “ bred only in the old ways of a house of humble consequence ”

He returned She would certainly know all the illustrious alliances of his house He sought some rejoinder to ease them both

“ What hast thou heard of the modern ways in Parbatsar ? ” he asked

“ Various things,” she replied, her eyes twinkling a little

He recollected that the wife of the ruling prince was no other than Jandore’s elder daughter, the princess Rampiyari

“ And what dost thou think of the modern ways ? ” he asked again

“ Are they to be pursued ? ”

“ ‘ What person asks woman’s reding ? ’ ”

He pricked up his ears

“ Canst continue ? ” he demanded.

“ His slave could continue,” she answered, diffident

“ Go on,” he said

“ ‘ What person asks woman’s reding ?
The world deems their wit be shallow,
Speak thy truth, none thereto hearken
Yet what were then the world womanless ?
Saku’s shape and Siva’s fire ours,
Thieves are we and hallows also,
Vessels we of vice and virtue,
Of knowledge vessels and of ignorance ’ ”

She stopped

“ Go on ”

Sanjogta laughed very slightly and deferred to his will

“ ‘ The man of wisdom, the star-reader,
From books kenneth planet-courses
But woman’s book, therein unredy

No new word this, but ever was so.
 None has mastered our book, therefore
 Cover they their ignorance, saying,
 In women, lo, lies no wisdom ”

She stopped

“ Go on, Sanjogta ”

She complied but now with a touch of shyness

“ ‘ Yet woman shares your weal and sorrow,
 Your hunger share we and thirst gladly
 From sun-hall fare you and we with you
 Lakes are we whose swans you are—
 What are you from our breast sundered ? ’ ”

She had spoken the lines of the ancient epic simply and with beautiful sense

These words that she had quoted were the words of her bold and beguiling namesake in both their minds were the next lines, and all the valour and defeat that ends the tale

“ Vainly sought she his corselet rings,
 Her eyes upon his visage staring,
 As on chance gold the starving beggar’s . ”

“ And wilt thou be the Princess of Kanauj to me ? ” asked Sangram

“ Never in consequence,” replied Sanjogta, her eyes again venturing a faint smile, “ nor in beauty, *aryaputra* ” She paused, and then added, “ And not, it is the prayer of thy slave, in ruin ”

She smiled for she had left the great matter of the epic unnamed

CHAPTER XIX

1937

SAPTASVA’S DASEHRA

THE new year came in and while Sangram and Lunkaran of Bhadana (whose wife and children had joined him) lived in the quiet asylum at Parbatsar in the State of Doura, in Surthawara mischief gathered speed and became disaster

Henry Adams, nearing retirement, had acquired an energy that had never been his during his five years’ tenure. he investigated affairs for which he had hitherto been content to take His Highness’s word that all was well. More than a few men in the State were now ready to suggest and help, who had formerly refused to discuss with the Suzerain’s representative. He was honestly horrified at what he found out, and the more he unearthed, the more he hunted, till finally he wrote an extensive report to signal his coming departure. It caused a storm in high circles in the Political Department, and Mr Adams was called to Delhi and had to face a very unpleasant interrogation. however, after much *laissez-faire* in the past, he found courage and

honesty and stuck to his guns. It had really been the introduction of the Spaniard and the Frenchwoman that had touched him off. The Frenchwoman was not unobtrusive and as the prince's mistress considered herself the social equal of Mrs. Adams. Mrs. Adams had not agreed.

The appointment of a new Resident had been very difficult. The situation demanded a man of outstanding character and abilities allied to gifts of insinuation. The best combination of these qualities seemed to reside in Major Frederick Siddons, who was recalled from long leave to take up the post in the autumn of 1936, when Sangram was marrying in Doura.

Surthawara took an instant personal liking to Major Siddons. They were very much of a type. Major Siddons was a first-class horseman, in character he was resolute and charming, he was astute, and he had a thorough knowledge of the customs and prejudices of Rajputana. He did not consider white men *ipso facto* the superiors of brown and he knew the Rajput for the inferior of no man on earth, for his vanity proceeds from his attributes and not from his desire of himself — There are not enough Major Siddonses at the service of India.

Major Siddons learnt up his case, and when Surthawara found that he could not deceive the Englishman, there were powerful disturbances but Major Siddons had a flair for the niceties of Indian manners and proceedings and besides being a horseman, he had been a soldier of considerable repute in the Persian and Syrian campaigns, with the result that there was never a final breach between him and the prince. Neither was there any material retrenchment. Surthawara was uncontrollable.

The only part of the Surthawara programmes of which Frederick Siddons approved, was the most spectacular and extravagant of all — namely, the opening of the race-course. The air-programme was a luxury, the military programme an undue expense, neither of these could repay the State except in the probable case of a second Great War, and then they would not repay the State so much as profit the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, Siddons laid the foundations of a long-term scheme for substantial reimbursement of initial expenses by the Government, should there be a war. However, these manœuvres were at present diplomatic rather than practical. The Kishora plan could be made the profitable toy of a prosperous State, but as things were it was a monstrous drain on Surthawara. The new forests would one day repay in rainfall, a generation hence. The polo and palaces were completely wanton. But the race-course he backed.

He saw it as a popular fair. Access to the State was not difficult and to Surthawara's surprise, he threw himself energetically into an expensive campaign of advertisement and consented to the allocation of substantial prizes.

So the new year wore on, and in no department of Raemall's behaviour was there any longer any measure at all. Whatever he did,

he did in excess, whether it was an act of generosity, of depredation, of malice, of luxury, of appetite. His people began to denude their shops of wares in the bazaars, lest in a sudden fancy he order the whole stock up to the palace, and pay for nothing. They hung back, and were directed to stand out ready to salute if they heard the drums go. Reports of the dissipations and inordinate luxuries of the palaces began to circulate, though the retainers had exchanged boasting for silence but there was no disguising what went in and little disguising what went on. The country people began to dread the flashing of the great cars along the dusty roads and the huntings in the hills. For if the game bolted out of the *ramnas*, the crops went underfoot, or even, where the dyking permitted, the great cars were driven across cultivation. Taxation soared to new levels. Even the acquiescent sons of caste began to ask—all this for what?

All this, however, was endurable, preferable to revolt, to a people whose souls were fettered by the doctrine of Karma and whose behaviour was disciplined by the experience of generations of tyranny. But things came to a pitch which no Hindu could endure. Then it was again as in the days of the Islamic invasions. No longer at the country hand-wells in the shade of a tree did the women stand and stoop, chattering and singing as they let down and wound up their pitchers. No longer did the women walk back to their houses, balancing lotahs of water on their heads. No longer did the great skirts of the Rajputnis swing across the fields and up the thorny pastures when they took the midday rice and pulse to their men, no longer did they reap and thrash and winnow in the open. The women that walked fearless of the tiger and the wolf kept within a stone's throw of house and village, and if they heard the motor-horns or saw the great cars flashing in the dust, they hastened into their yards and bolted the doors. Up and down Surthawara cultivators, traders, casteless mountaineers and country Rajputs strictly forbade their women to be seen abroad. For countless of them were borne off, both casteless and caste and Kshattriya, the desecration of Tara Devi their desecration too.

The hot weather came and brought the muttering kingdom under its incandescent rigour. Thereafter the rains, that paralysed with downpouring, then set in the temperate months of autumnal growth.

The first ten days of Asoj were given over to the yearly festivals that culminated in the Dasehra, the worship of weapons and the horse. Festivals known throughout India but peculiar to the fighting peoples, and kept with highest splendour in Rajasthan.

The Dasehra of this year was to be especial in the records of Surthawara, for in the following season the race-course was to be opened, and all its excitement and glory was to be the crown of the horse Saptasva.

Saptasva was the secret of Surthawara.

The State of Surthawara had inherited the observance of this

festival from the parent house of Chamunnar, and with private adaptations, kept the ceremony of that house, Raemall even, in his arrogance, seeking to outdo Chamunnar in the punctilious revival of antique glory. The whole festival was in honour of Siva Mahadeva, the god of war, and of his instruments.

The night preceding the first day was spent by the prince in fasting, prayer and rites of purification. Thus he came to the celebrations both prince and priest.

The chief part of the ten-days' festival was the worship of the Sword of Surthawara, an ancient two-edged sword from the armoury, true brother of those other swords, Durendal, Tyrfin, Joyeuse. The Sword proceeded from the Palace temple and was lodged in the temple of Siva above the great *maidan*. In this Office Surthawara displaced the ordinary priests, himself high-priest of the Rajput worship, his nobles following in tapestry of gold shot with silk, with ancient ceremonial swords and bucklers, and in their turbans, crests, feathers and twigs from birds and trees sacred to Siva. Here with the pennants and other weapons, the Sword lay nine days before *Baba Adam*, the monstrous red-smeared Lingam of Siva.

There is no need to detail the bathing of the horses, the worship of the *Gadi*, the homage to the Prince, the Public Audience, the return of the Sword among a thunder of drumfire and cannon.

The tenth day of Asoj, the day of Daschra itself, was the day of the great procession, commemorating the journey of Rama to redeem Sita from beyond the river Brahmaputra. This was the last and most sacred day of all. Therefore the lemon streak of dawn found the prince already up and engaged in the initial rites, greeting the rising sun whose attribute is borrowed by the Destroyer.

In the morning came the first ceremony, when the named horses were all paraded in the great courtyard, and set back in ranks, while the year's new horses were led out before them and named to the prince by equerries for their masters. Thus had Saptasva been led forth and named to him, three years ago, a year, all but a month, before the passing of Tara Devi. And last year, at this ceremony, he had had so piercing a vision of the dead woman, that tears had sprung into his eyes and he had needed the absolute of every faculty to proceed unshaken. But afterwards, many had paid for that untimely vision. And this year there was no vision at all.

So he went through with the naming of the horses, and distributed largesse to the squires and grooms. Seeing among all the splendid animals only Saptasva.

In the third hour after noon the superb procession had assembled, the State elephants, blacked, painted, gilded, howdahs of solid gold, of solid silver, umbrellas, fans, emblems, ringing elephant-bells, embroidered elephant cloths, fringes and tassels, gold-bound tusks and varnished nails and hooves, the Household Guard on horseback, the camel-corps, cars and artillery amid the throbbing bass of the great war-drum and the rolling fire of *nakkaras*, the blaring of trumpets,

the jingle of bells and the clatter of arms, the great procession moved off to the parade-ground above the city. The crowds, from parapet and bending branch, shouted and clapped and threw mangolds and roses as the nodding howdahs went by atop the slow plodding elephants. The elephants waved their trunks and fanned their ears, smiling the elephant-smile, and their little eyes missed nothing.

In the first howdah, the golden one, the Suzerain's representative sat with the prince, taking precedence of all others. In the second howdah in former times had ridden Tara Devi behind flimsy curtains, and once Padmavita also, but now there were no Maharanis.

At the great *maidan*, the Raj Yogi advanced before the hill of Siva and led the prince up to the temple terrace. Down below the vast concourse moved to its appointed positions, a glittering sea of blazing colours, mace-bearers, bowmen, elephants, horses, camels, artillery and the air-pilots, and in a concerted homage a single din clove the heavens as the elephants flung up their trunks and trumpeted and the horses neighed and men shouted. Then came the great march past.

Now the sun was westering, and on the temple *ghat* Surthawara took from the Raj Yogi a cageful of wild blue jays, sacred to Siva. The cannon fired, he released the jays, and upon the reverberations they flashed blue-winged into the sun, uttering their sharp cry. This was the last act in the worship of Siva, the god of war, and the worship of his people was borne aloft into the empyrean, was borne to the Destroyer on the wings of the wild blue jays.

After this came the last act of the worship of the horse, each man his favourite. Surthawara left his encrusted coat at the temple and in simple garments went down the mount to the side of the *maidan*. This for him was the supreme moment of the whole festival. From the hand of Bikramajit of Dol he took Saptasva, and led him up the sloping ground to the foot of Siva's hill. Here, before a dais and in view of the whole populace, he fed the horse by his own hand, garlanded him with a heavy garland of roses, marigolds and jasmine, and on the whorl of his forehead set the red *kunkum* mark, the mark of Siva.

Then turning to the people, holding the horse by the gold-worked bridle, he said, "*SAPIASTVA*"

At the sight of the horse, the crowd had begun to murmur, and now the murmur slowly grew like the clapping and roaring of a great tide.

Saptasva, unlike the other horses, was not heavily caparisoned. He was bridled only, and stood in the glory of his burnished beauty. He was a big horse, clean and compact, superb in carriage, moving like a harmony. His head was noble and his hooves delicate, he was both touchy and benign. His mane and tail were the colour of cream and his coat golden, and in the sinking sunlight he shone resplendent as a topaz.

All about his feet was the tide of acclaim and the hissing ripple of his name, "*Saptasva!* *Saptasva!*" and he gazed abroad on them with a god-like benevolence.

When he had drained all the nectar of that moment, Surthawara

led Saptasva on and gave him to his groom, and retracing his steps, mounted the dais. Now came each noble and officer with his favourite horse, presenting him to his prince, feeding him and garlanding him and marking him on the brow with *kunkum*, to lead him across to his groom, returning to take his stand by his lord. Man after man came by, now divested of gorgeous raiment, the handsome big-boned men of Rajputana, arrogant before men but each before his horse a humble lover. Horse after horse, spare or snugly built, polished and scarlet caparisoned. When the light began to sink, torches came out like stars, and everywhere, in margins and lanes, about and behind the dais, stood ranks of torch-bearers each still as a brazen candle-stuck.

Now in order to see this great festival, Mrs Siddons had come out to rejoin her husband even before the rains were quite over, and Surthawara, out of regard for Major Siddons, had given her a privileged position at every pageant. She reminded him of Mrs de Travers, and like Mrs de Travers she was an excellent horsewoman, though no shot. Noting this, he mounted her from his stable, and in the lull between the celebration of Dasehra and the races, he took her riding himself, and having taken her once, he took her several times and again and again.

"You had better be careful, Alethea," said Major Siddons, "you're playing with fire."

"I know," replied Mrs Siddons, "I find it very warming, dear."

"I'm not joking," replied her husband. "You know as well as I do that these gentry don't usually go to the length of much personal attention. H H is a champion all-round blackguard."

"I thought you liked him?"

"I do like him. A lot. I'm fond of the brute. But he's a blackguard and as regards women——"

"I know," she said, "I know, I know. I just want to ride that yellow horse, just once, just round the race-course, that's all, then I'm through."

"Through!" echoed Major Siddons, "through what, I wonder! Frisking up to his whistle!"

"Fred, you'll make me angry."

"Well, I am angry. I object to my wife bill-sticking herself with one of the most notorious rakes in India. I'd be obliged if you would give it up."

"All right. If I don't ride the yellow horse before Christmas, I'll give up."

"Damn women," said Major Siddons, "I wish you were in England. There's a lot to be said for keeping women out of sight."

Alethea Siddons achieved her desire surprisingly soon and rode Saptasva round the race-course in the dawn. When Saptasva exercised, beaters cleared the area of observers. His performance was secret. She was full of the experience.

"Wonderful," she exclaimed, "wonderful, wonderful horse,

Maharajah Sahib He has the spirit of a tiger and the heart of a lamb.
Like riding a waterfall "

Raemall was delighted Mrs Siddons, like Mrs de Travers, did not suffer from the inarticulate triviality of her kind She forgot herself easily in her enthusiasms but she was well-bred and no fool.

"But don't race him this year," she said urgently, "don't race him at your races, Maharajah Sahib Next year Not this year He is not yet in his strength, Maharajah Sahib Listen to me, Maharajah Sahib "

Raemall laughed at her, indulgent and admiring

"Take him back, Jaipalji," he said to the groom, blanketing the horse himself, and jealously watching the man conduct him out of sight "Now let us take a turn in the country, madam "

This was not, however, the end of their intercourse Alethea Siddons found that the prince was more easily brought on than shaken off His behaviour was always correct, if gallant evidently he classed her with the women whom a Rajput respects—at present But his civility was something of a royal summons

A day or two before the races, he took her riding in the later afternoon and finding she had a fancy to be taken over Ranthambor by him, he set out with her, leaving orders for the cars to come and fetch them back

The road lay through several villages, and for the first time, she observed that the people, when they had salaamed, looked after them with unfriendly expressions

Presently the great cliffs and towers of Ranthambor appeared, soon the bulging bastions crowned with *kunguras* and faced with red stone were rearing overhead

There was a band of Mer hillsmen in the road, who took their bridles and led them up the ramped way through the elephant gates

"The guardianship of Ranthambor is in the hands of my hillsmen," said Surthawara, "a privilege as old as we Rajputs they guard the State treasure from me "

"I don't think your people—either in the villages or up here—approve of my riding with you, your Highness "

He laughed shortly

"You are not the trouble, Mrs Siddons," he said "I am the trouble I am a tyrant. Surely your husband tells you all my misdeeds! "

He took her over the great fortress They seemed to be alone, but the foresters came and went invisibly, observing them all the time Raemall knew it, and sometimes he pointed out a watcher to her where she could see nothing It made her uneasy but he only laughed

"Now you have seen everything that the visitors usually see," said he, when they were again in the great fore-court, "but I will show you parts that are not on view I cannot show you the oldest parts as this would be against my religion But we will start with Durga's Shrine You know Durga is the Rajput Kali, the goddess of death Durga is the queen of strongholds too The priest sacrifices a

goat here every day there's the crotch and there's the sword In 1542 one of my ancestors decreed the daily sacrifice of a man to the goddess, but at the end of a few months it began to deplete his forces, the goddess very kindly sent word that she was satisfied of his piety, and ever since it has been a goat "

The hideous idol grinned at them from her dark but spotless shrine Alethea Siddons saw many things of remarkable beauty and many places of peculiar horror, and when finally in the gathering dusk they stood on a high tower looking up the valley, she did not know whether she was excited as she had never been before or sick with repulsion from the place and the man beside her She was suffocating in an atmosphere of age-old ritual secretly performed, of extravagant wars, of the worship of stones, of orgies of luxury and ornament, of repellent asceticism, of cruelties and magnanimities, of the *johar* of women, the handmarks of countless *satis* on the wall Alethea Siddons was suffocating in a present she had thought an antique past

So she stood on the high tower beside Surthawara, and from between the battlements looked at the black peaks that starkly jagged the citron sky, while the shades of night fumed up from the east, below was a great open expanse on the valley-floor, and here all was purplish and tenebrous, uninterrupted save by the dim carved cone of a temple on the far side of the expanse The western sky grew colourless, the twilight crawled over every object, and the east was gloomy from the womb of the fort came the muffled melancholy blast of a conch, from the lifeless temple below came another Alethea Siddons glanced down into the night-filled valley, and then her heart stood still

Over the dark expanse a flame went weaving, tall as a man, yellowish, bluish, giving no light, soundless another rose and wove and wavered, another and another one died, another died, another rose aimlessly they went weaving and wavering, to and fro, up and down, companies, soundless

She dragged her eyes from the manifestation The prince was watching them with interest, but without fear She suffered the clutch of terror if he felt no fear, then she was absolutely alone She steadied herself

"Maharajah Sahib, please take me away," she said

He glanced down

"Are you frightened?" he said "I don't think there is anything to be frightened of It is interesting that we should have seen them The people say they are only visible before death or a disaster The priests say they are the spirits of the dead but the scientists say they are marsh-gas It is a damp place, and the rains are only just over"

"Oh," she said, looking out and down again, recovering herself, feeling very foolish for her fright "Oh"

"Have you ever seen a royal funeral?" asked Surthawara, reflectively, as he watched the vagabond fires "A tremendous procession hundreds of priests and the brotherhood of Siva's ascetics, regiments of mourners, visiting rulers, all the vassals, all in white. music and

wailing, the cries of ' *Hari-bol ! Hari-bol !* ' conches and bells and the elephants all the people turn out and it becomes a great festival - in my case, or my brother's, there would be our favourite falcons and horses and hounds led before us, and aloft on a throne on the pinnacle of the tallest funeral coach, myself sitting robed, in the sunlight, in the sight of every one —If I were to die in America or China," he said, "I should be embalmed and sent back to Surthawara to the priests and the people to burn among them, for I am holy —And," he added, with a sudden sardonic turn of humour, "if anyone thought to make me a death-gift of a pair of sun-glasses, I should look so much alive sitting aloft, that they would mourn with accidental sincerity."

Alethea Siddons laughed, uncomfortably, not entirely appreciating the reason for his discourse it was now all but night in the court below, inside, servants were coming with lanterns Reassured, she looked outwards again The ghastly fires still wandered to and fro

"The flames are eerie," she said, "what did they use the great field for, Maharajah Sahib ? For exercises ?"

He turned and looked at her, and it was a moment before he replied Was that expression surprise ? How dim the air was Fear was again creeping chilly up her spine and a moment later had musted her mind.

"But that is the royal burning-ground, madam," he was saying "All the sons and queens of my house have burned there down all the centuries If we princes do not achieve death on the field, it is on that burning-ghat that we must burn that is where all the *satis*' handmarks lead"

The date of the races came, and for the moment obliterated the murmuring of the people

The events were to last three days Races in India are very much country meetings but this was an ambitious affair Entries were flattering Surthawara and Major Siddons between them could command much interest among the great owners and the cavalry regiments besides there were many events designed to bring in small landholders, farmers and dealer-owners the date was well set between race-programmes to the north and to the south-east

The prince and his vassals and the people all nursed the golden secret of the State, the horse Saptasva Saptasva was entered for a single race only Saptasva was to preserve to the State the highest prize of all He was the mascot and the darling of the populace

The month was still the month of Kartika, sacred to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth in whose worship men dice, and the last part was sacred also to Vishnu, the Sun and Preserver, in whose worship, in the last days of the bright half, lights would float upon Lake Gogunda and fireworks blaze overhead To the honour of Lakshmi was the great gambling and lottery upon horses to the honour of Vishnu was the golden horse, named after the horse that drew the chariot of the Sun, Saptasva.

For the outsider, the Surthawara Races were a free invitation to a native festival for the pious, the event could be a pilgrimage.

The State became a goal the railway carried heavy traffic, the roads were full of bullock-carts and camel-carts and horses and motor horse-vans villages and towns coined money out of the travellers, and the great *maidan* began to look like a spring fair Last came the fast cars of visitors of rank and of the Europeans and most unobtrusively came the kindred of thieves

"Our speculation," said Major Siddons to Surthawara, "is your Golconda, Maharajah Sahib"

Surthawara laughed

"I love lucre," said he, "I would never deny it you know the joke against us of Surthawara? 'The Surthawari gives way before one man only the Marwari' Aha! Nevertheless, to me this is the glory of my horse Saptasva"

The days went by and up in a pyramid of success and excitement success, success, success, excitement and excitement the horses of Surthawara made a good showing the winners could not have distributed themselves more tactfully Meerapur wore its evanescent mantle of green and flowers the betting was keen and very heavy the course and the races were a triumph people began to call it the Derby of India The pyramid of success rose tier by tier like the gardens of Babylon till the great race of the last day, the greatest race for the great prize, some of the finest horses in northern India lined up for the start and among them the unknown horse, the glossy golden horse, the horse more lovely than any horse there, the horse that set every dealer, every cavalry captain, every polo prince staring and asking the secret of Surthawara, Saptasva

But the great prize was not won by Saptasva

The prince was involved in a week's hospitality after the races He had never thought of it except as a basking in the admiration and envy of the chosen guests a leisurely relaxed luxuriating in the accomplishment of a great venture, the assurance of a great revenue and entirely above these, a glorying in the open possession of the horse Saptasva

The venture and the revenue were his, the horse was his he was no less a horse than he had been in a year or two years he would win on any flat course in the world no one could guess the honours he might sweep in, nor the strain he might sire and the chosen guests eyed their host as Adam perhaps eyed him that held the sword of forked flame at Eden's gate

But Saptasva had failed to win his first race, the great race, he had not sprung straight from dark void ahead of all the choice horses

The sons of Pabu the bard would never sing that song That song never yet sung never that song

Surthawara stationed a smooth smiling mask of himself to receive

the congratulations and the praise and the envious looks - behind his mask, he lived in a rage of disappointment, and his savage humour grew from day to day

Saptasva ! Saptasva ! and Tara Devi ! These had defrauded him of supreme things matchless themselves, found and chosen and possessed by him, loved beyond all measure by him, they yet refused him their supreme gifts

Into the four corners he had thrust the brand let the horse wait . he should join her that had named him

The last guest had gone

A day went by another . and another

The people in the Palace were disquieted , they were like animals uneasy before a storm

The people in the city and country began to murmur openly, as offence and injustice fell on them in a hail out of the blue levies decreed on profits from the races, inspectors sent round on examination

Of a sudden, towards evening, an order came down to the stables

Saptasva was required at the Palace

They put on him his finest harness and sent him up in a splendid saddle over an embroidered cloth

He stood at length under the white walls of the Palace, before the flight of steps and presently his master came slowly to the head of the steps He stood looking at him a long while, his features devoid of any expression

He saw the horse, and he saw also Tara Devi, the one with the other he would never see the one without the other they were one thing He saw them, now clear, now obscured, among curtains of smoke he must be rid of them

He turned his hard eyes on the grooms and guards standing in attendance

"Fetch faggots and petrol," he said

They winced but they did not move

"Fetch faggots and petrol ! " he repeated

They moved but they did not go

Surthawara turned on them like Indra himself, black and full of lightnings "Fetch faggots and petrol, I say ! " he thundered "Obey ! Sons of whores ! Hear ! Strip off the cloth and saddle ! Hobble the forelegs and the back legs ! Hobble them, I say and with chains ! Do you dare stand ? Siva strike you ! May dogs devour your entrails ! Fetch faggots and petrol ! "

The men flinched and scattered two grooms stripped the horse two hobbled him with links The prince stood still, silent, his fierce hard eyes fixed on the animal and the horse Saptasva, golden and glossy, flaxen forelock, flaxen mane and tail, at first curious of his chains, and then careless of them, stood pricking his ears back and fore, naked in his beauty, benign and untroubled under that dire gaze. His two grooms stood like statues holding him by the head, the others

stood back with the saddle and saddle cloths, and the tears ran down their faces

The faggots were a long time coming, and Surthawara was beginning to look about threateningly when the first arrived the men were slow and stupid, and their master cursed them severally, function by function, organ by organ, back to generations of fathers and down to generations of sons nor did he hear the protests of his courtiers, nor the high-pitched clamour from behind the lofty grilles, nor the running of feet, nor the clatter of galloping hooves, nor beyond that a sullen approaching roar, the like of which had not been heard before in Meerapur

Bikramajit came running into the court, fell on his knees, embraced his master's feet, implored and wept "Who are you?" demanded the prince, "I do not know you get away, fool"

Two horsemen galloped into the court, one a vassal, the other the Resident

Frederick Siddons flung himself off before Surthawara

"Your Highness," he said, "this is not to be! It is a stain upon your house and your race No Rajput will forgive you as long as you live your name will be infamous the bards and chroniclers will pass over your reign in silence This cannot be done I cannot let you do this I am your friend I could not endure such disgrace upon you Maharaj, I appeal to your chivalry and honour"

Major Siddon's blue eyes were as full of fire as Surthawara's were full of black lightning, and like the rapier-play of enemies, their glances duelled for advantage

Finally, some decision declared between them Surthawara was not going to repeat his order nor to rescind it

"I give the orders for you," said Siddons after a moment, when the prince might have spoken, but had not and turning to the grooms and guards, began—"The Maharajah's orders unshackle the feet, take away—" when his words were lost in a surging roar, and the populace burst in at the great gates, sweeping past the sentries, flooding over the court they ran like a tide up to the steps, they bore away the horse, they stood gesticulating, jostling, shouting, a raging sea of humanity

Surthawara drew a great breath, cast over them a glance of disgust and disdain—for this was a mob of all castes and callings, Brahmans and beggars and tradesmen and sweepers, a city rabble—and re-entered the Palace

The Resident found himself facing them alone and they redoubled their yelling, for he was not even the oppressor, he was the alien, the Raj

He was a man of powerful personality, but he could get no hearing yet if he also turned into the Palace, clearly they would sweep in after him and ravish back their wrongs, unless the Colonel of the Household Guard collected his men and fired first

He stood his ground They did not assault

Then a man some way back was pushed up on the shoulders of his followers, and began to vociferate louder than any - they gave ear, and yelled in response - he lashed them on - they yelled again - he cried at them again, and they howled, yelled, and the tide rushed up and overwhelmed the steps - shots - knives and staves were out - there was a volley of musket fire - they battled under the Palace door - and then the mob uncontrollably fell back from the steps, and back farther, trampling on itself, and the yelling diminished, and they edged back

Major Siddons lay on the steps, on his face, a pool of blood under his head

Rajputs and others of the household, nobles and officers who had retired into the Palace to seize weapons and to man the turns of the narrow stairs, appeared, first one, then another, swords and axes in their hands - ashy-faced, they saw what they saw - like the mob they held away - for only sweepers and corpse-Brahmans may touch the dead

Surthawara appeared also in the tall door

With a quick step, he went and pulled the dead man over by the shoulder - Even sweepers shrank at his pollution

He stood up, and laughed at the mob, easily, masterfully - disaster needs no emphasis

"You fools," he said, "it was I whom you should have slain - Get back to your houses - kennel yourselves, curs - Go home - go"

Under that stare they began to ebb out from the back, and soon the last mobster had slunk away

Surthawara stooped to the body

Instantly the men standing round stepped forward, but keeping distance - "Maharaj!" they presumed to exclaim, "do not touch it! - an outcaste! - a corpse! - stand from it! - Maharaj! - Maharaj!"

The prince stooped and gathered up the dead man - the head fell back over his arm and blood ran down his coat and dripped off the hem

"Fools also," he said - "In the calling of arms, and in love, there is no caste"

He went in, carrying his burden

He set the dead man on a chair in his library, closing the door - he stood for a very long time looking down at him

His thoughts made no mark on his countenance, yet they flickered and flowed and led on one the other, ranging over years long dead and the future and the aspects of many things - So this, this was the end of his rule - A very long time he stood lost in thought, curiously passionless, like Poland on the still field of Roncesvaux - But at last, very late, as his thoughts wove, came a smile, bitter, wicked, and lastly sparkling

Alethea Siddons must be told

To-night Alethea Siddons would be under his protection

He walked over to the door, measured . yet a certain spring in his step

He looked back thoughtfully but without feeling at the dead man

He went on, putting out his hand to the door-knob His hand wore blood

He stared at it then shuddered violently . he heard the words of the dead man, the inflections of the voice, each word that had turned him back from infamy again he looked into the blue and terrible anxiety of those eyes he heard his own words he remembered the thoughts and feelings that had spoken in those words his heart grew sick in him he dropped his bloody hand to the key and turned it in the lock

He came back again , with the dead he kept his brief vigil of repentance and the cottonwick-flame was burnt up in the fire

CHAPTER XX

1938-1940

MAHADEO

IN the following year, Raemall was deposed by the Raj and the terms of his deposition were absolute he might never again set foot in his realm

He was allowed to retain his Humalayan estate and his house and grounds on the Malabar Hill of Bombay, and it was here that he chiefly resided He was prevented from access to Europe The State was obliged to settle an immense income on him nevertheless the sum was far less than the expense of his incumbence

Sangram was appointed Regent The income settled on his brother he substantially recouped on his own household he was sickened of luxury The tribe of bards, poets, musicians and actors he dissipated, keeping on only the hereditary bards and chroniclers of Pabu's immediate kindred the retinue of women he settled off one way or another—some of course had gone with the prince The Frenchwoman and the Spaniard, both being over thirty, with great practicality went to their own countries and out of the proceeds of their jewels bought themselves husbands

Knowing that the people would not appreciate parsimony in their ruler, Sangram made a statement of the position and his intentions and his will of the people, and conceived the idea of making a record of his speech at his first People's Durbar, and of having it circulated in the villages and towns It was done with due circumstance, and the impression it made was great, and he followed it up as soon as possible by a personal tour

The situation of the State was catastrophic . even Sangram and

Partab of Reolia had not formed a just idea. Every creditor, from great banks to bazaar merchants, erupted. It was a work of months to sort out the claims, examine the statements of rogues, come to terms, and form a scheme—Sangram laid plans to cover a period of ten years, keeping in mind the possibility of a war and its probable reactions on India and Surthawara. The major religious festivals he kept up with decent sufficiency. He cut down on the great programmes wherever he could. The races, clearly a mine, were closed by scandal for the present at any rate. Jalankar and Ranthambor he proposed to make a tripper's target, although such a scheme was personally repellent to him. The works at Kishora must stop where they were till Kishora began to pay. The air-programme he kept on a life-line only, seeing the political future with some clarity, he was obdurate to retrench on the military scheme, knowing that the Raj would help him if he refused to help himself. He reduced the elephants and the kennels and cars; he cut down the polo but kept the pick of the stables, being in fact an inveterate horse-fancier. He hunted and shot and saw to it that the vassals were kept in hard condition and he curbed them with reasonable restrictions and saddled them with responsibilities.

He chose his ministers with great care, making a clean sweep of favourites and idlers who had dug themselves in. He looked for loyalty and long-headedness. He issued an amnesty and recalled all exiles, save in the case of the house of Rajboland. The father of Hamur Singh was dead, and Sangram banished his sons for the duration of his own life, and Hamur's sons' sons till they should sue for clemency for Hamur Singh of Rajboland had raised his hand against his prince.

He called Partab of Reolia to be his Diwan, to help him in the immediate measures of salvage—an appointment that could not last above six or eight years, for Partab was growing old. For his Minister of Finance he took a Jain banker, of the kin of his boyhood's friend Kashinath. His chief magistrate was a Moslem lawyer and with him he yoked a Brahman. Of all these men he demanded loyalty to the State and in spite of prejudices, from these men he got it.

One favourite he had always about his person—as who will not, who may?—and he was not idle, but a man of miscellaneous offices and abiding honesty and this was Lunkaran Singh of Bhadana. Becoming in the course of time more intimate with Bhadana than he had ever been in the old days, Sangram had broken his family reserve and had obtained from him the true stories of Rajboland's death and the death of Tara Devi, so far as those were known to any but Surthawara himself. From these he conjectured the truth. He never spoke of it again nor did Lunkaran Singh. Nevertheless, it formed a deep bond between them. Lunkaran Singh at no time came to hold office, yet his office was perhaps the greatest in the State, and it was to his honour that he never forfeited the credit in which he was held alike by his master and his master's men.

The new Resident, a conscientious and anxious person, pointed out

that the festivals and the horses still cost a lot of money, and that there was an erratic quality in some of Sangram's proceedings

"I have no wish to share the fate of Aristudes, Mr Palin," replied the regent

"Of Aristudes?" asked Mr Palin blankly

"Upon whom at least one citizen of Athens voted death," said Sangram, "because he was tired of hearing him called The Just"

Mr Palin abandoned the topic

"I hope to goodness this chap doesn't crack up like his brother," he said at dinner to the visiting military inspector

"Good God, what's he up to?" asked the visitor

"Says some pretty odd things," replied Mr Palin dubiously

Sangram had not been ruling eighteen months when the expected war broke out in Europe, in September 1939. After Munich, with the burglars already in the attics and cellars, and his grown-up children all out night-clubbing, John Bull, in a black suit and white collar, had put up the umbrella of appeasement and under its shade had made a surreptitious but frantic tour of his house, looking for the hatchet—rusing in the coal-hole the revolver—mixed up with his wife's mending the cartridges—at the back of the store cupboard the old torch in the hall drawer—battery dead the poker—with the tennis racquets the police whistle—in the cat's basket but in India they had not needed to be so careful about umbrellas, and the establishment of the armies of British India and the States had been increased beforehand. India declared war with Britain while the politicians objected because the Viceroy in Council had done it without an express vote from the Legislative Assembly—in England the Prime Minister also declared without an express vote from Parliament—the Princes were pleased because they desired pride of place among the Empire declarations

As soon as war was declared, the great rulers made spectacular voluntary contributions and submitted offers of men and arms having plain convictions as to where allegiance lay

Sangram could imagine what his brother would have done at this juncture, what, for the credit of the State, he must be desiring the regent to do the State could indeed raise men, but the regent was embarrassed where to turn for cash. There were only the State jewels, hoarded in the rock cellars of Ranthambor: and this treasure was not beyond the dreams of avarice. In the last war, Surthawara, owing to the policy of the Maharani Krishna Lal, had made a very small gift, and her men had all enlisted in alien regiments. Sangram had felt the disgrace as keenly as his brother—and more deeply, so had the vassals and the common people. Sangram was determined to let no embarrassment work the same effect. He sent a message to the chieftain of the autochthonous Mers of Ranthambor, who alone knew and guarded the secret doors to the rock cellars, and would have killed the prince himself if he had attempted to discover the way into

his own treasure. the curious expedition was arranged and carried out, and in due course a great weight of rubies and diamonds and sapphires travelled from Surthawara State to the Calcutta market, and an equivalent value was gifted to the Raj.

And Sangram set about recruiting a regiment of infantry and a camel corps and a mechanised column and now the pilots of Surthawara and the air-field at Hastina came to life again. Some of the greater vassals took themselves over to England and enlisted in the Royal Air Force, others trained others and one of Raemall's plans bore unexpectedly early fruit, for Hastina became a school for pilots.

Sangram thought often of his brother in the four and a half years since he had left him. During the period of his horse-trading, he thought of him with an anger and a hatred reinforced by his hatred of the things he had discovered in himself but in the course of that year, he realised that he was heaping on his brother a thing he should reckon upon himself. When he had been married a few months, he saw that his brother had done him a service, by terrible means but still a service. He hated him violently for the means he had used but no longer hating his brother with the force of his own hurt, and constantly hearing reports of new transgressions, he began to be aghast for his brother's sake. When in September his wife Sanjogta bore him a son, and a few weeks later the story of Saptasva reached him, his hatred began to dissipate in a turmoil of fear and pity. Raemall was one of the twice-born to what humiliation was he condemning himself in his next life? And even discounting such fatal considerations, in what reckless hell did he now daily live?

And the year had gone about again here was the war, in which that passionate man might have redeemed himself and he was boxed up in a palace above Bombay, with nothing to do but play games and drink and gamble and debauch.

Sangram went to his wife.

"One has come to me," he said, "who serves my brother's person the Thakur Tej Singh."

Sanjogta glanced up. Sangram had never spoken to her of his brother, but she was observant and she also heard any news that came. She realised that there was a great quarrel between them and a bond which the quarrel had not broken, for her son bore his name.

"I have no doubt I could lead in the field with the men of Surthawara," he said, "in spite of my defect at least I should be allowed to sit about at base, if not to command. But this is my brother's chance. I shall get my chance later, perhaps in this war, perhaps not till the next war falls against Persia and Afghanistan. And at this stage I do not at all wish to abandon the State to ministers."

Sanjogta had long ago discovered the story of his blinding. She had noticed that never in his function as regent did Sangram speak of "my State," "my lands," "my vassals," "my men," and never would. So he now said, "the men of Surthawara," and "the State."

She did not ask what he meant by 'the next war' She knew . and she was the daughter, sister, wife and mother of soldiers.

"I shall ask him to receive me," said Sangram, "I know what he would have If I agree to make the request, it may be obtained, since I am blind if I do not object, who shall?"

Sanjogta made no rejoinder

"I will therefore go down to Bombay," said Sangram, and then raised his eyes upon his wife "Do I take the boy with me? It is thy will . thou art his mother"

Sanjogta looked down and bit her lip She had heard many tales of that man many of his generosity, and more of his ruthlessness She guessed where her husband's hope lay If this were help, she must not refuse it

"Let him go with my lord," she said.

Sangram travelled down to Bombay as a private gentleman, taking with him only Lunkaran Singh and a band of servants, and at the agreed hour, he drove in at the gates of the great white house, half Indian, half European, standing in its grounds on Malabar Hill Malabar Hill is the elegant colony inhabited by rich European or Indian merchants, governors and ministers of the city, and by relegated royalties

He was kept waiting and sat in the great ante-room with the little boy, who knew he was to stay behind with Bhadana

Presently Tej Singh appeared, welcomed the prince, and brought him to the room where Raemall was He introduced him and withdrew.

Surthawara was standing in a tall bay window between potted palms. His look was hard, Sangram's scarcely less at the sight of each other, some obscure shock jarred between them

"I wait upon my lord," said Sangram, after a moment, "I offer salutation and duty" He made his obeisance neither the one nor the other offered his hand, which is the native salute of the Rajputs

"We shall get to the point more quickly," said Surthawara, "if we talk English I have no wish for compliments and civilities"

His manner was impersonal but cutting Sangram saw that he was not sober he also saw that his eyes were bad, the lids red at the edges, bruised pouches under them His whole physique had deteriorated If he were now to brandish the sword of Jaswant, it could only be at the expense of a degenerating heart He was overblown formidably handsome still, but no longer beautiful He looked the victim of satiety, yet insatiable Sangram guessed that Raemall was now never sober He wondered also if he had taken to opium

"It is a mischance," proceeded Surthawara, insufferably arrogant, "that I no longer happen to be ruling my State when this war at last develops I laid down my air and military programmes with this probability in view As the prince of my people, I wish to have some share in taking them to war"

Sangram walked down the room towards him, stroking his moustache. One thing he had already realised that man was gone who had looked on at his own misconduct as if he were a stranger. Thus man was susceptible

"The position is complicated," he said drily

Surthawara frowned.

"The position will be less complicated if you keep to ruling and home-organisation and suggest that I conduct overseas the troops we are raising," he said, in a voice like a chisel hammered on stone

"It is unusual," said Sangram, "to put troops into the hand of a deposed ruler"

Surthawara looked very black

"My request is refused?"

"I beg your pardon," said Sangram, "I did not realise that this was a request"

"Of course it is a request," snapped Surthawara, obliged hurriedly to re-form his position, or at first clash lose the issue angry at the indignity of doing so "Humanly speaking, not a surprising request"

"Ah," said Sangram, "if we are speaking humanly, that is different I had not observed it"

"God damn you," burst out his brother in a sudden fury, "don't stand there taunting me. I'll have my way by hook or by crook and you'll regret it if I have it without your help, and if I don't have my way the State and the Raj will regret it too. I may be put aside and half a prisoner, but if the doors won't open I'll bring the house down, by Siva and by my throne and sword, I'll get out and I'll get to the fighting with my men behind me, and may the gods help anyone in my road"

Sangram saw that he was half mad with mortification. His brief resentment died so too did his hatred

"Maharaj," he said in their dialect, "let us leave this question for another time. to-day we shall quarrel and not agree. I myself have a request to make. I have brought with me a person I wish to present to you. With your permission, I will fetch him"

Racmall was taken aback. He paced across the window and looked at his brother out of the corners of his eyes.

"Well," he said uncertainly

Sangram went out, and a moment or two later he returned alone with the young child. He shut the door and came up the room, leading him by the hand. The boy was nearly two and a half years old, and already behaved himself with that grave civility which the high-born Indian child brings to a formal occasion

"This is my son," said Sangram, standing behind him, a hand on each shoulder. "He is named Racmall Prithuraj Lakshman Singh. He is aged two years and four months—Greet thy uncle and father, Lakshman"

He pushed the boy forward, who advanced two or three steps, bowed very deeply three times with his hands to his forehead, and

pronounced in a high treble, "Humble greeting, uncle and father, Maharaj" He waited a moment to see if his hand would be taken

He then retreated to his own father, burying his face against him, frightened of the great silent man but his father turned him about, adjuring him to remember his race

Raemall recoiled, staring at the child, completely shaken

"Thou seest whom he resembles," said Sangram "Take him for thy son also, Raemallji He is given to be thy son also"

Raemall abruptly passed a hand over his face

"Go," he said hastily "I will ask thee to come again later to-morrow or the day after To-day I am unwell Go now, Sanga"

For three days there was no sign from the house called Surthawara Lodge but on the fourth day came an invitation for Sangram to send in his household and himself arrive in the evening

He did so, and was escorted to his rooms by servants Towards the time for dinner, the Thakur appeared and conducted him to his brother

He was astonished at the change in him He must have gone in for some brief regimen for his eyes were clearer and his whole person in some way improved he had recovered an interest and thrown off something of what had hounded him He talked to his brother in a civilised manner He was, and remained, sober—And thank God it is not opium, thought Sangram—None of his entourage joined them

His Brahman butler announced the meal

"Where is the boy?" he asked Sangram then, with hauteur, "does he not eat with us? I sent orders for special sweets to be cooked for him"

"He is eating with his attendant," replied Sangram, "he goes to sleep early"

Raemall rested a suspicious glance on his brother Sangram read it immediately You do not trust his life to me—the glance had said—and perhaps there will be reason why you should not

"If you wished to see him, he could join us for dessert," suggested the younger man

Lunkaran was summoned The order was given

Raemall's spirits rose noticeably at this and continued to do so as the meal progressed through its varied courses of partridge, green pulse pottage, curries, sugar and curds finally the child was brought in, and before him were set silver dishes trimmed with leaves and piled with sweetmeats There was also a small spotted leopard whose head nodded a long time when you set it off

The boy was characterised by the same solemnity that had marked his father as a child, but physically he was his uncle over again, and every now and then, as he lost his shyness, there was a flash and laughter that made the likeness extremely startling

Raemall observed him intently, at first subject to conflicting emotions which made him disquieting company but the child took his tone from his father, and his father appeared unaware that he was in the presence of a tiger that had not decided whether to caress or to destroy

Raemall said suddenly, with a suavity that could inspire no confidence, "Hospitality has its sacred obligations, but in my time I have committed most sacrileges there are poisons that delay in effect. are you not afraid of my hospitality, Sangram?"

"No," said Sangram, with candour

"No," echoed Raemall, subsiding, watching the child, "no" Presently he began to pluck up, and laughed, and began to behave himself towards the child as grown-ups mostly do in that land where the "baby-people" are so much loved and spoilt and so easily lost

"Lakshmanji," he said, "a son of wiseacres, eh? Wilt thou be a philosopher too? Son and grandson of wiseacres, why does the leopard's head nod?"

Sangram watched his brother, and though he did not cease to see that he was middle-aged and had ruined his prime, he saw something of the old grace of beauty slowly descend upon his handsomeness as he talked to his nephew

Later on, when they had done with the child and had sent him away, they played a game of billiards Raemall was still a master, but his game had lost its fineness also he was nervous

"Sanga," he said, in his own tongue, when he was far ahead and his winning inevitable, putting up his cue, he spoke with impulsive resolution, "let us get this business over I have no patience Will they let me do it, if you ask it? I give my word that I will never use it to make trouble, to make any attempt to return to rule I have no such desire I . . . recognise . . ." He broke off, and rolled two balls down to cover his great difficulty, watching the intricate cannons until the balls lay still again, "I . . . recognise . . . that as a ruler, I am . . . unfit I have some regard for the State . . . apart from myself I would attempt no return" He stopped, and then went on, as if talking to himself "I have some regard also for the credit of . . . Rajasthan But I have never cooperated, not even with Jandore There are chances now for Rajasthan . . . we are still a very great people, I see all that, I can see advance, prosperity, honour, federation for Rajasthan . . . *ek bap ke betan* . . . even those that have strayed into other folds or never come into ours . . . *ek bap ke betan* . . . but Rajasthan can do with no more of me and my like for sons" He sighed, and came out of his reverie, and glancing at Sangram, continued more naturally, "I wonder if you remember, Sanga? I recollect something you once said—that the great battles were not fought on the field, that in times of peace we Rajputs were called as much to those other battles, as to wars in times of war—you said that, or something like it I can see it now, I understand what you meant, I can see it is true in peace is always war. there is no occasion to idle" He paused, and went on in bitterness, "I can see

so much ! but I am a cut-throat, a wastrel, a desecrator, a parader. 'An officer and a gentleman,'—the English have it—well," he laughed shortly, and said in English, "I may claim to be a prince and a gangster."

Sangram said nothing—he could not trust himself to speak. Raemall was talking like a man looking on death, who yet has time to gather himself for thought. Pride and impetuosity were Raemall's fiercest qualities—before him his brother was curbing his impetuosity and stood stripped of his pride.

"I will pass my word," repeated Raemall, anxious before this silence, and again very nervous, "to make no attempt to return to rule. And why—why indeed should my word be of any worth, when I swore before you the great oath that I would do what I cannot do except with your consent. What faith in my word should you have? I could not even enlist as a sepoy without your consent. Sangram, I do not ask for command. I am not asking this so much for the honour—though it will be the one true honour of my life—as because it is the only way I can see to redeem what I have done." He stopped, turned away, and added, "If I could also find a Rajput's death." He broke off.

"I will ask it," said Sangram, "and I will obtain it, O my brother."

Raemall swung round—relief and joy swept years off him.

"Sanga, Sangaji, little brother, you renew my life," he exclaimed.

Sangram, deeply touched, felt himself guilty of his brother's evil with the generous heart of his race, he spoke his own remorse.

"Raemallji, O my elder brother," he said, "since we are talking thus, there is that which I must say. I also bear my part in what thou hast done—what I brought thee just now, I could have brought many years earlier—my vanities also have been costly to thee."

Raemall looked at him attentive—it was a new view—quickly he turned it inside out. He shook his head.

"What thou hast done or not done, thou hast done or not done," he said, "what I have done, I have done—to each his own tally." He laughed, but affectionately, and gently. "I am a ruffian," he said in English, "but at least I know it—you, I dare say, are less of a saint than we sometimes thought. For myself, I say only this—I have always dealt direct with men, I have never lent my ear to sycophants or indispensables—no masters for me! and thus," he said, in his own speech again, "thus thou comest back to me, Sanga."

"And now answer me, Raemall," said Sangram, "is the gift accepted? Is my son taken to be thy son? I had my share in what we know—thou art due thy share in what I enjoy."

"Thou hast no other son yet, Sangram."

"Nevertheless."

"And what of her?"

"She will do it—it is all fitting—the degree is fitting."

Raemall's eyes softened, he stood looking at his brother. Perhaps it was then that he came into a new way. He presently replied

"It is accepted," he said, "yet only between thee and me. From now I am in the field and have no household, I will not have him from her. We need no priests to this, thou and I, we suffice ourselves. I take him to share him with thee, Sangram. It stands thus and not otherwise between me and thee."

There was a silence.

Then his spirits turned suddenly about. "Well now," he exclaimed vigorously, in English, "there is a great deal to talk over," and forthwith he plunged into the whole question of recruitment, types of force, officering, training, scale, probable dates and theatre of action. "We shall be for Egypt," he said, "we are half a desert people, there's going to be a major campaign in Libya"—but he did not speak as one directing, only as one learning what was going forward, which much surprised Sangram, and fortified him.

At the end, Raemall laughed sardonically. "Some of my wilder extravagances are becoming useful unduly early, are they not?" he observed. "I sow the wind and you reap a prosperous gale, eh?"

"Alas," said Sangram, "we were never mariners. It will be the English that reap your prosperous gale."

They both laughed.

"I cannot see what India will do," said Sangram, "when there are no British to contend with and to laugh at."

"Can you not?" rejoined his brother. "I can. I can see that too. We shall contend with one another as of old, and the laugh will be on us—Or do you think one can really learn and change?"

"I suppose the leopard once upon a time grew his spots," observed Sangram. "We shall survive."

"O optimist-jī! O excellent optimist-jī! No one else is as dry as you," exclaimed Raemall. "You sit apart like Raghudeva Rao and when you see your chance you kidnap the ball and hide it up your sleeve and walk down the field and unobserved throw it in near your own goal." He looked at his brother and went into a great shout of laughter. "Then you cry 'See, sirs, see, the ball's down here! Score! Score!'"

"Nonsense," said Sangram, "I'm not a Jain. I'm in the scuffle and I never cheat."

"Listen. I have something else to ask, Sanga," said Raemall, with a complete change of tone. "I may as well ask it now since we are reconciled, who knows but what death comes to-morrow. I stand committed to certain private engagements, for which I make provision, and if I die, it will be seen how far I have got—it is the only economy I have ever made, and it is a very small part of my current expenses," he interpolated with irony, "but I beg you to carry them to a conclusion for me if I am taken, the other parasites can get what they deserve for hanging on to a failure—pandering to a proscribed prince."

but these are private promises . . . such as to Bikramajit of Dol . . .”
He sketched a number of engagements of a personal variety
“I will make them my own,” Sangram said

Sangram met with the most unequivocal opposition to his proposal but he knew his case—he had his arguments—at least two of Raemall’s extravagances were now proved god-sends—and he was absolutely determined. The gentlemen of the Political Department woke up to the fact that the quiet and well-behaved Regent of Surthawara was as energetic a man as his unregretted brother and of a disconcerting integrity. They took refuge in delay, but were routed out of it. English political circles, accustomed to every variety of princely *volte-face*, considered this the most extraordinary piece of behaviour on record. The officials dealing with the case could not imagine the motives and situation behind it, and when these were exposed to them, they still could not imagine them.

However, Sangram, by some spell peculiarly his own, enlisted the voice of other rulers of his race, including even Chamunnar and the deeply injured Jandrore, and in doing so, began to knit up the emulous proceedings of the Rajput States against a future day long after this war then opening. He also converted his English opponents one by one.

It was at length conceded that while he ruled, his brother Raemall should conduct the troops of Surthawara to Egypt, without command.

The Surthawara Rifles were recruited, equipped, and trained by the end of 1940. A camel-corps was also ready. A motorised detachment was raised. Although the Treasury was crores in debt, the great vassals had consulted their private resources and combined to present the major portion of the equipment. For Surthawara himself, who seemed to be regenerated by the prospect before him, had handed back the whole half of his year’s income, and this was a challenge that none could or wished to refuse. Already, in August, the Battle of Britain had been fought, and in it had flown Prahar, and the son of Partab of Reolia, and Maldan and two others who lost their lives—all of whose deeds had passed into the songs of the bards. Every Rajput in the State, high or low, was determined to wipe out the record of 1914.

At last the day of embarkation came. In the broiling sun of winter-time Bombay, the lorries and caterpillar cars were hoisted and swung over the stern of the ship. The mules looked foolish, but the camels maintained their superior dignity even on the derrick’s arm. The cooks, bakers, *bhustis*, tailors, washermen and sweepers that attend a Hindu regiment had gone aboard. The bugles blew, the war-drums rolled, the kettle-drums rattled, the troops marched on. The commissioned officers, apart from the Colonel and a major, who were Englishman, were Surthawaris and Rajput kin, who had taken service in the Indian Army, and had been gathered back to the Rifles. They

ranged up on deck and stood waiting at ease then long cars, garlanded with roses, jasmine, and tuberose strung with gold thread, were sighted rolling down the quay. an order snapped out, there was a crack as the men came to attention. the trumpets clanged and the *nakkaras* rolled their drumfire and in that continuous high-pitched thunder, the Prince, the Regent and the young child came on board

There was not a man of his kindred present but saw the deposed and exiled ruler with deep emotion many had groaned under his yoke and cursed his name down every avenue of eternity, but this was war, and there was not a man from greatest chieftain to the humblest shepherd, or from the most undistinguished sepoy to the senior Surthawari major, who did not feel that this was the due crown of their effort, that they should go to war behind the prince of the blood of their fathers

And when they looked from the bold florid prince and his brother to the grave handsome child, they were startled, and their hearts became big in their breasts

The tradesmen of Bombay jumped uneasily behind their counters and in their banks and warehouses as the voice of Siva rent the air above the docks the drumfire of the *nakkaras* was drowned by the shouts of "*Hur ! Hur !*" and Surthawara's thousand-throated battle-cry, "*Hur Hur Mahadeo ! Hur Hura Mahadeo !*"

CHAPTER XXI

1942

THE ANVIL OF PAIN

The Surthawara troops were drafted to the Sudan they won glory and decorations in the Abyssinian campaign, which was pre-eminently the campaign of the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions Abyssinia done, they were drafted to the Egyptian front

Here in the campaign of Cyrenaica, they were among the Indian forces that put through the desert out-flanking movement, they were the centre of the Libyan Army

Then came the capture of the great part of the Italian army, and the retreat before Rommel

Surthawara came back Sangram went down to Bombay to meet him His appearance was much improved he was more spare, more fit unfamiliar, too, with the trim small military moustache He was alive again but Sangram found him very bitter.

"This retreat !" he said, "I cannot stomach it All that excellent work and magnificent fighting a fool's miscalculation and we all come motoring back again We ought to be in Tunisia now only two positions, where they could make a stand between us and Tunis : and yet we all come driving back They say—we never planned to

get so far—what a splendid fluke ! They say, we are not prepared to go farther · the equipment is not here, there is not the shipping to supply water in the desert beyond El Agheila, there is not the petrol, resources are stretched to the last point, no one allowed for such a fluke and look, we have kidnapped the Italian Army Well, it was the Indian Divisions ran the Italians out of Abyssinia we wanted something more this time O, it is hard, it is hard, Sanga · the men do not understand so great a retreat it has broken my heart How should they understand ? I have asked myself the answer is no good to them ”

“What is the answer ? ” asked Sangram

Racmall laughed morosely, and drank off his peg

“The answer is a British answer They are a nation of adventurous traders and civil servants no man with any brains or spirit takes to the profession of arms in peace-time With the exception of a few Service families, the British Army is the resort of fools Fool of the family he'll have to go into the Army So in war their clever men are in Signals, or in Intelligence, or in Supplies, or in great firms, or they are sappers or artillerymen and the balance find themselves at the bottom of the commissioned ranks the British respect seniority, and who are their seniors ?—the men who have sat quietest and grown oldest Senior men, peace-time colonels, wrecks of 1914 and the Boer War, generals who won distinction on Salisbury Plain all the hand-picked duffers of the land, and at the top the cream—cream ! a crust of condensed cotton-wool—a crust of seniority, stupidity, and caution They don't sack a general till he's lost a campaign, or an army Pass the whisky ”

Sangram thought this indictment over, and accepted it

“The only solution for them in future,” he said, pushing across the decanter, “will be military service To avoid what you describe in time of war, the only choice is no army, when able and fools would all start at the tape together or service, when the men with wits would also have served and proved themselves and in a war could be given a reasonable rank and stand a chance of erupting through your crust of cotton-wool Since they must have a peace-time army, they must introduce military service Well, thank God we are born to it ”

Racmall drank his whisky almost neat, staring in front of him

“I kept the men to it,” he said presently, “on the retreat also I don't make trouble, I don't interfere but I am considered a nuisance, I exploit my standing to inspect the Surthawara forward positions, to sleep under fire, to move with the troops I borrow a rifle and I keep my score My score ! where are the big game seasons I had planned in Africa ? my African ivory, and lions and rhinoceros, and the big deer ? Italians and Germans are my African big game—well, it's a poor exchange, but a good score, I may say much better than my tiger-score better, I mean, when due allowance is made for the fewness of tigers compared with the enemy ” His

tiger-score in Surthawara had stood at a hundred and twenty-six . he was counted one of the four crack shots of India

"Who considers you a nuisance?"

"Oh, not the men! To them I am a mascot" He paused "A mascot," he repeated "Our official mascot is still that grey monkey we took with us The men call him The General Sahib We have both been in very tight places and neither of us seems to get hit, not a scratch—Just a regimental mascot," he said again "An unofficial regimental mascot"

Sangram found it painful to listen to him and he was not sober

"Of course," reflected Raemall, his hand on the neck of the decanter, "the Lord Hanuman may be specially protecting the General Sahib and perhaps he includes me"

"This is not a Rajput's talk," said Sangram sharply

Raemall laughed, pulled himself together, and pushed away the decanter

"Prisoners," he said at a tangent "I believe the Germans treat us decently industrious beggars, they hope to seduce us from our allegiance but do you know what the Italians did to some of the Sikhs? They shaved their beards off"

Sangram drew a sharp breath

"That means the dagger for every Italian," said he, flushing

"Yes," agreed Raemall "No quarter for Italians Tigers among goats—And I will tell you a curious thing I resent indignity to any of us even to Madrassis Even to Mahrattas yet imagine one's forgetting who the Mahratta was" He stirred, like a man shaking off thoughts he should not harbour, and without thinking, poured himself a peg "Of course," he said, "it's an army of volunteers two million strong and none of us conscripted Moslems, Mahrattas, Madrassis, Brahmans and all, that makes a difference, whether it's done for money or not But among them all, the men I feel kin are the men of the North and West, whether they pass under the names of Moslem or Sikh or Moslem Jat or Hindu Jat, yes and the Pathans from across the frontier" He paused "Sanga," he said, "I have thought a great deal about your peculiar propositions Do you remember that morning in Sicily when you first told me about what you thought you saw? I thought it was a madness then later on I thought, 'This is simply a scholar's subject'—but now that I have lived with other men, Indian and English—hanging on a precipice between life and death—I believe you have hold of a great truth." Raemall, for once in his life, had become profoundly serious "Sanga," he said, "did you go on with it? is there an answer? Have you—" he smiled as he recollected that morning in Sicily, "have you found it all out?"

Sangram appeared to hesitate At last he replied, and it seemed unwillingly, "Yes I've got it out"

"Well?" prompted his brother "You don't seem pleased with the answer What's wrong? What is it?"

Sangram shifted, but did not reply.

"What's the matter?" repeated Raemall. "Your idea was that we and the Scandinavians are one stock and you wanted to find out when and where we were one people. Have you discovered that?"

"I have."

"Well," said Raemall, and by now his seriousness had deserted him again, "I suppose it's a moral jolt to any Indian to be told he is a European, and vice versa—but we can get used to the idea. A conception of racial unity won't make or break nations. Tell me some bits you think important."

Sangram apparently found this easier to answer.

"One of the important bits," he said, "is that all we Rajputs, and our attendant Brahmans, have certainly not been more than two thousand years or so in India. That means that all our older genealogies are myths. Those traditions may belong to the old Aryans, if the Aryans were a people—but not to us. Most of us have been only fourteen or fifteen hundred years in the land. Our parentage is Parthia and the Sakas and the Jats. The Sakas and the Jats came down from Asia, into which they had gone up. The Jats and their kindred, before they crossed into India, were men with fair or red hair, blue and green eyes, and ruddy complexions. If we still had that colouring, it would not jolt us or the Scandinavians to be told that we were of one people. But the sun of centuries has changed our colour, if not our build and our character."

"Is that true, Sanga? It's fantastic. What's the evidence?"

"It is true. The evidence is in the contemporary Chinese annals, and in the Greek and Roman historians and geographers. There's nearly as stark a difference, you know, between one make of man and another, as there is between a horse and a zebra." Sangram was at ease now. "And in the early centuries of the Christian era," he went on, "there were Hindu kings from Kabul to Patna, and they all ruled under one allegiance. Their origins were Macedonian, Parthian, and Saka, and they ruled under the emblem of the Lion. Their monument was at Muttra. In those days they named their land *Sakastan*. They've changed their name but not their breed. The Parsis are also of our breed—but only partly of our history. *Sakastan* is the first name of *Rajasthan*. The present political name of that single land," he added, "is *Pakistan*."

Raemall stared a moment.

"But we fly at one another's throats," he objected hotly. "We all hate one another—Rajput, Pathan, Moslem, Hindu——"

"So did England and Scotland and Ireland, Protestant and Catholic. But there is a difference between the hatred of like and unlike. There is solidarity in the hatred of kin."

Raemall sat back, staring at his brother, stroking his moustache, turning these things about in his mind, pursuing all the implications. Some minutes passed. "Well," he broke out suddenly, "where do

the Danes and Norwegians and English come into all this, eh ? Asiatics, are they ? Did they go caravanning up into Asia ? ”

“ No,” replied Sangram

“ No ? Well then d’you mean they went out from Parthia ? If you’re going to tell the English—and the Dutch and that fraternity—that they’re Orientals too——” Raemall gave himself up to laughter. He found the prospect thoroughly funny. “ I don’t know which will have the worse time of it, if your facts get about,” he said, still laughing, “ to ask the leading peoples of the West—and America—to admit themselves Persians,—Orientals—no better than the Arabs and us—haha ! Ahaha ! Orientals ! What a joke ! the English—Orientals ! Oho ! ahaha ! I haven’t laughed like this for months ! God bless you, Sangram !—or to ask us to but Sanga, that’s serious—d’you realise ? If that’s the price of re-achieving Rajasthan—or Sakastan, or Pakistan, or whatever it’s called—that we should root up all our roots in the Puranas and the Vedas, because they are not ours . and bring ourselves out of Macedonia and Parthia and Asia a bare two thousand years ago ”

He stopped, and became very thoughtful again. “ It will be worse for us than for them,” he said finally, “ they have only to give up belief in the superiority of a white colouring—and God knows we are fairer than many Europeans—and for those of us who have become Moslems it’s no great adjustment but for us Hindus, it means giving up all but the most fundamental of our beliefs and half our pride ” Again he stopped. “ Is that where we were one people, then ? ” he asked. “ Parthia, Sangram ? Are the lion of Britain and the lion of Rajasthan and the lion of Persia own brothers, then ? And there’s the fourth lion—the black one—Abyssinia——”

Again, and abruptly, Sangram was ill at ease

“ What is it ? ” said Raemall, since no reply came. “ What are you driving at ? Eh, Sanga ? Scythia—the Scythians ? What’s the difficulty in that ? ”

Sangram moved uncomfortably

“ No,” he said. “ It was not Scythia. It was partly Parthia, and before Parthia. I can’t go into it now. It’s too big a question altogether. But you’re right and the choice before us is even more more. I I’m not ready to discuss it ”

Raemall considered him curiously. He felt he already had as much as he wanted to go on with. Then, suddenly, he perceived the nature of that ages-forgotten reality, as a man who might draw aside a curtain in London or Lucknow, to find his view the soaring, silent, shuning sides of Everest

A moment of that vision, and he fled to refuge in a lowlier topic

“ Well now, tell me what is doing in India, Sanga,” he said, “ how you see it ”

Sangram with obvious relief hastened to draw the commonplace across that awful loveliness

"What is doing in India," he echoed. He looked at his brother : he saw his discomfiture and again he had the impression of a man who, with death the end of his field of vision, as he advances takes thought to discern the shape of his world "Well, our regiments have seen white men bolt in battle in the Singapore campaign and for the Eastern theatre hospital arrangements are nil, and hospital trains of white men have few nurses and doctors and hospital trains of Indians often none and the trains can be lost for two days together in sidings . . . so that is not good And Congress Provincial governments have skipped out of office betimes, since they prefer opposition to office some of the leaders are in gaol and others are engaged in meditation in the hills They are well away from and above the possibilities of a Japanese invasion and later they will call this Facing the Guns And the Central Government has not perceived that food is a munition, so the Provinces will make their own arrangements and they are not hurrying to cooperate a plan, so one Province will hoard and another starve Perhaps it is bad luck that the Indian Provincial Governments should be faced with the necessities of war or perhaps it is salvation "

"There we of the States are at an advantage," observed Raemall, "for we are used to war—and responsibility and rule and misrule, eh?" he added "Well, now's our chance we of the North and West are the only peoples who have any idea of vigour and loyalty and rule and honesty Listen to me! I am your crooked echo We are not men of speculation we are the men of deeds All our songs and tales are of deeds . . . husbandmen and soldiers. After this war, I hope that all we who defend—Moslems, Mahrattas, Mad-rassis and all—will raise a voice that will be heard among the Brahmins and *bamas* who live on us I agree more and more with you, Sangram the forty million artisans and schoolmen have no right to rule the four hundred millions through three hundred odd delegates and a Secretary and Office that have only theoretical knowledge of India "

"No," said Sangram, "no indeed! But I am looking forward to an India as independent as Canada, with at any rate us of Rajasthan and Pakistan in the Commonwealth or league of our Western kindred This is a true unit, by geography, race and history, politically it's a sound unit The rest of India can please itself like the rest of Europe, but we shall be its stewards An India developing her own economy, with sufficient heavy and export industries to allow of doubling her consumption of foodstuffs—but with a personnel stiffened and supported by Englishmen They will come as before In that way alone we shall profit from their practicality and yet escape the enthusiasm of their theoreticians Until one day we of the North and West, whether Moslem or Hindu, have accepted education, and are ready to take our place among the sons of priests and traders. Even in the villages, it is the old soldiers alone who are not abased before the holy ones and who have a short way with the corruption of the postmaster and policeman "

"And now tell me what is doing in the State, Sanga - you say you see shortage ahead - have you feathered our own nest?"

Sangram smiled and stroked his moustache

"I have taken leave to assure a supply and a reserve and seed - the crops are good, and I have turned in a fair report of what we can spare. I see no reason to rely on charity or cooperation among the politicians of British India - we would have relied on the traditions and principles of the Britishers - but there are no longer enough of them in the civil administration to do more than colour the sauce. The flavour is indigenous again. But in the day of famine I will accuse the sentimental political philosophers of England, the Parliament and Secretaries that have given the cornsack of responsibility into the frail hands of the sons of priests and tradesmen - and I will accuse us that have lagged behind in taking the new learning."

"And what else?"

Sangram described the doings in the State, without gloss and without flinching. Raemall heard him out, his feelings less and less impersonal and more and more mixed - for Sangram's programme was a criticism and contradiction of nearly everything that he himself had done or left undone.

He rose and walked up and down the room.

"You old woman," he said abruptly, as Sangram concluded, "you miserly old woman."

Sangram stretched and laughed.

"Not at all," he said, "I'm a practical man."

"You are an old grandmother," said Raemall, recovering a better humour, "you have the instincts of a Travancore matriarch and if you are at all lucky they will call you the statesman of north-western India when you die. When you die - Sanga," he said with another sudden change of mood, now forbidding, "have you any idea by what a thread your life has always hung? Did you know your life was a dance on a sword-edge? I wonder how often I have wished I were of Tartar or Turkish blood, to take the needle and the cage and the cord to you - oh, you may smile, and so have I smiled, watching you dance so delicately and unconscious - but when you were at Parbatsar I sent a poisoner to find his way about your household. Did you suspect Ramchander? - but then I called him off." He dropped upon the arm of the sofa where Sangram was sitting. "You always win, Sanga," he said. "I have never known whether I loved you or hated you the more, but I suppose, since I always let you win, that I love you. Oh yes," he said, "oh yes, oh yes - from Jammu to Comorin we are passionate as men and sentimental as children - a mass of passionate sentimentalists. This is how the hardheaded and choleric Brahman Nehru comes to be ruled by *Bapu* Gandhi. For us it is sweet and tormenting. And what is it like for you people, who sit and calculate the chances of your puppets and purposes?"

Sangram looked up. His expression had the intensity of a man's

who watches death take one whom he desired to live : for now he surely knew that Raemall was advancing into that shadow

"I know nothing about the hearts of saints," he said with an effort at humour, "and I do not thank you for that particular comparison I am in a class with you, not him"

"You think so, eh, Sangam ? I would call you as wily as any Brahman or *bania* and cold-hearted, for you will not even name the words and never have the sweetness you may know but the torment, if you know it, is a different torment, for with me it is a torment of frustration from my wish—for what gain ?—and with you it can only be the torment of seeing me astray"

Sangram was very slow to answer

"I know both," he said at last, "this is the worse For the other is one's self but this is for another . one's self can be controlled if one will, but another may be opposed but must not be dominated . one's self is of no value, but another is . beyond all price"

"Another," echoed Raemall, "any other So I called Ramchander off to hear myself put by my brother in a general category of human souls or human mammalia Sangram, this is certainly your last incarnation after this you will achieve the final impersonality of God"

Raemall was so bitter, and spoke with such a curious forsakenness, that Sangram's reserve broke.

"O Raemall, Raemall," he exclaimed, "thou knowest how it is with me !" and he gave what was asked of him, and gave freely When that comfort was rendered, they fell gradually into talk of their boyhood together, this and that incident and experience and emotion, and into talk of those episodes of their manhood together that it was pleasurable to recall But as they came down the years, they came to those many things from which at the time they had turned their eyes the unmentionable and unforgotten incidents piled up in the mind of each, and the final offences rose like still bleeding sacrifices to crown a charnel-heap of bones They broke off betimes, early among the yet pleasant years and a long silence followed

"Do you know what they already say of you ?" asked Raemall, breaking the silence at last "'*Chhari mazbut thi*' 'His rod is firm' Well, once they called my rod firm too The only difference is, that nothing will shake yours Dear me, it is funny, when you think how in France and elsewhere you tried to mislay your heritage and standing '*Chhari mazbut thi*'" He laughed drily "I have had about a year's discipline now," he remarked, "the first in my life. I have learned a great deal I dare say it may even be perceptible under the microscope I see that the personal legend is not enough that way we are no more than Alexanders I have disgraced the name and calling of ruler And yet if I went back to rule to-morrow, in a month I should embark on fresh Kishoras, and Jalankars, and so forth" He tapped his glass with his finger-nail "It is very peaceful under fire," he said, "things simplify themselves I suppose you realise

that to be alive is to be under fire, and that is why you have simplified yourself, and you see where your road goes. Most of us dash off after tiger and buck and treasure and we lose our road. We even never know there is or was a road."

Sangram did not know what to say.

"Perhaps you owe your perspicacity to me," added Raemall. "For they also say of you, 'He has but one eye as the Lord Ganesha but one tusk.' Aha!"

"You are not yourself, Raemall," said Sangram, "this campaign will be successful in the end."

"The campaign! I'm not thinking about the campaign, my dear boy. Oh, they'll advance and retreat and finally advance, what does that matter? The longer they fight, the more chance of what I believe you called 'the simplicities of battle.'"

Once upon a time Sangram, hearing himself described and remembered and noted as his brother had done just now, and on the occasion of their final reconciliation a year or so ago, would have thought it perhaps a testimony that he was getting a little way along the path of wisdom. But since his season of horse-dealing, he had finished with himself. Such tribute could only quicken a disclaimant smile. His attention was on his brother. He is at that stage of drink, thought Sangram, when the mind is very clear and the tongue has slipped the bit.

"No," said Raemall, discoursing at his leisure, "you are one of the masters among men, Sanga. For you are master of yourself, answerable before your own conscience. You will not always subdue or control others. But generally you will, and no one and nothing can subdue a man who is his own master. You see how much I have been thinking. When the guns go and the 'planes drone, I am very clear-headed, for then I am intoxicated. And since you respect yourself, you respect all men and women and all castes and callings and you appeal to that in them which is strongest and yet weakest to resist such appeal. So you will lead, but not for mischief."

Sangram, listening to him, read the other by what he said of the listener. Suddenly, however, he awoke to the sense of those words as describing himself, and considering what he knew, found them ill-fitting.

"I despise nobody," he said with abrupt honesty, "for the reason that I have been forced to see myself."

Raemall laughed.

"You have found your palace a hovel," he said, "you have cleaned it out and left it for the winds to blow down and you go unburdened on your road. As I said! But to me my hovel is still a palace and I live in it and love and admire it."

"And to think you used to accuse me of flights of philosophy," said Sangram.

"So I did, so I did! And I will tell you a truth you will never now believe, Sanga. Since you have ceased to study to become a *nishi*

you have begun to become what you sought Yet it is hardly in the character of our race less than ever, if what you say is true Your . . . facts do make a very great difference. They grow on one Perhaps truth does grow on one I it gives one a sort of vision " He took his tumbler and smiled at the golden bubbles prickling up the glass "You and others like you," he said, pursuing his image with a deliberation that lent a cloak of cynicism to his sincerity, "will raise up Rajasthan from the dun place where she has fallen and you will trim away her rags and tatters and her dead garlands and her fringes and hems that are balled with mud you will bring her out from the veils that blind her sight and the courtyards that dwarf her strength and the dusty webs and ropes that tangle her in her mind that is stupid with squalor and superstition and the hunger of self-glory you will plant a vision and then in the noonday she will stand forth a queen to lead men, neither ancient nor modern and borrowing the ways of no other people, but comely and mistress of all her faculties and limbs, and men shall know her who she is so will she stand dauntless and resplendent with the garland of her choice in her strong hand, to cast it round the shoulders of the sun."

Raemall looked up at Sangram from under the corners of his eyes, and smiled, not without mockery but Sangram recognised the mockery for a target to turn off arrows

"I think," said Sangram, "that your vision is of a greater thing than only Rajasthan"

"You see how the simplicities of battle make a poet of one," continued Raemall, as if he had not heard, "and yet I don't recollect that Pabu and his calling were ever much to the fore in a fight At least the brotherhood would not omit to record such virtue of themselves modesty is not their failing"

"But they would certainly lose their livelihood if they catalogued their valour and virtues to compete with their masters'," commented Sangram

Presently Raemall took up his leisurely and unreserved string of reflections

"There are three persons and one thing that have made peace in me," he said "Those are Sitala your mother, and yourself . . . and another And the thing is the reck of battle to fools it is a chance of salvation Sitala I wronged when I blinded you and the other I . . . in the desire of pride . . . dishonoured . . . and destroyed . . . and you I have sought to cast off and to lose but this never endures, you return to me" He paused, and his face hardened in a grimness, and his eyes flashed "And if I were to have you all in my power again," he said, "in six months there would be proscription and offence and destruction for I love and admire myself but I do not respect myself and if I had Rajasthan under my hands I would ravish her and rifle her and leave her for dead in a mudhole under a rock, to be the prey of the hullman and the adventurer and the kite

and the worm and yet I see her standing radiant to throw her garland round the shoulders of the sun, and the children of that marriage steady and splendid as the stars "

He broke off, and was silent a long time, staring at nothing handsome, hot and heavy-eyed, formidable overblown

All this, thought Sangram, is water that flows once under the bridge never again and its going past may not be named hereafter

"Is the boy come down with you?" he demanded suddenly

"He is coming down next week with his mother and the daughter "

"Ah," said Raemall, "very good, I have a trophy for him — It is time to go to bed," and he poured out from the decanter

"That will spoil your score," observed Sangram

"Quite right that will spoil my score," said Raemall, and left the glass untasted

Sangram's wife Sanjogta brought the children down to Bombay, the lad and the baby girl She had obeyed her husband's wish in partly coming out of purdah, and setting foot on the path of freedom, like the old Senior Mahirani before her she brought good-will and courage and discretion to the business, and her husband helped her through the difficulties of her country breeding and her total ignorance of medicine and her religious orthodoxy, with patience he explained, interpreted, persuaded and lastly helped with advice and even rehearsal And Sanjogta had rewarded him because she was won and convinced, and was now pretty much what you would expect a well-bred intelligent Hindu woman to be well-conducted, active-minded, standing firm on an ancient path properly read yet when she had come to Meerapur, she had been of an opinion which insisted on the digging of a tunnel under her door into the Palace, so that her child might pass under the threshold stone and not over Now she was a mother and a man's help but no priests' pigeon

Raemall had wanted to meet his nephew's mother, but, with what lay between him and Sangram, it was a thing that he could in no conditions ever conceivably have asked When he met her, he saw at once both what she had been, was, and what her husband had made of her and he treated her with very great interest, deference, and courtesy, as if he were making up to the person of this woman and mother of children all the outrage he had done her sex and presently he went back to Egypt

Now the retreat had ceased, and the Allied forces sat in their final hill-positions about El Alamein The rumours were intolerable the Germans were massing armour to smash through and overrun Egypt the Allied forces were massing to resist some said, to attack : others said, resources were sufficient for defence only, the Germans were to attack to-day, to-morrow, next week we were going to attack to-night, to-morrow, the day after The Egyptians were panicking ministers went in and out of office, were set up and fell from power,

governments fluctuated there was talk of secret overtures to the Egyptians from the Germans

Surthawara went up to the front positions, where the Indian divisions held the centre, with the British to the north and the South Africans to the south Indian troops were the great bastion of the waiting army

He saw some skirmishing, and came back to Alexandria. he waited and killed time and killed time and waited and arranged to go forward again but was prevented Prevented! Prevented by military authority! Prevented from inspecting his own troops he, Surthawara! Not a commanding officer, said they no standing of a kind to permit such an excursion at this juncture impossible very much to be regretted. quite impossible Captains, colonels, generals, ministers every apology later on, perhaps but now totally impossible, your Highness.

Surthawara, after many moments of supreme pride and glory and danger with his men, in the honourable campaigns of Abyssinia and Cyrenaica after weeks and months of cankering disappointment when all that was gained, was surrendered after a year of death desired, and courted, and never won —Surthawara broke his discipline at last and pitched into the blackest of his many furies and lost count of days and nights in debauch and drinking but oblivion was elusive as death

It was night He was sitting in a country gambling house, at a table. "Your turn, Maharajah Sahib" "Your play, sir"

He did not play his eyes were fixed on his cards

"Your play, sir" someone tapped him on the arm

He did not move

He did not hear. he did not feel, perfectly rigid not dead

There was consternation a starting to feet a shower of cards and money to the floor who knew first aid? good God! good God! brandy. a doctor paralysed

He was not unconscious, but a sort of phantasmagoria unreeled before his mind himself learning to repeat the generations of his house. the Rajput games of his childhood the bobbing pigtailed the face of Sangram's son, that was his own face and Sangram a young boy, and a stripling in the dust at the Aheria, and a man grown. blood, and the tinkle of a weapon Hayamor, the black kingly horse. Sangram's vision Sangram the weaving flames below Ranthambor the face of Tara Devi, when first he uncovered it in Ranthambor. the matchless profile amid the undulating curtain of smoke the head of Major Siddons falling back on his arm. the golden horse Saptasva in an aureole of leaping fire Sarup Singh of the sept Sarawat winning the first V.C. of Surthawara. Sarup Singh dead on the field of battle, his body retrieved at peril by his fellows, his soul borne to heaven in the arms of Apsaras: the bard Pabu pattering on his drum, chanting

the *rupaka* from one of the epics of Kanauj —and he wandered off among the fields of flowered verse .

“The heroes gird on their armour,
While the heavenly maids deck their persons
They assume the helm crowned with the war-bell,
The Apsaras bind on the anklet of bells
They draw the girths of the war-horse,
These adjust the corsage
Nets of steel defend the turban,
They braid their hair with golden blooms and gems
The warrior polishes his falchion,
The maid tints the eyelid with collyrium
The hero points his dagger,
The maid paints a heart on her forehead
He braces on his ample buckler,
She hangs the glittering orb in her ear
He binds his arms with a brazen gauntlet,
She stains her hands with henna
He embellishes his hand with the tiger-claw,
The Apsaras with rings and golden bangles
He shakes his massy lance,
She the garland for those that fall in the fight
She binds on a necklet of pearls,
He a necklace of the holy basil
The warrior strings his bow,
The maids let fly their fatal glances
Once more the heroes look to their girths,
While the heavenly maids prepare their chariots ”

Now, over and above the far-away senseless chatter and the coming and going, he heard another louder uproar burst with a supreme effort, he bent his faculties together, and saw again the table, and the fan of cards in his rigid hand, he heard what they were exclaiming, “It’s begun ! We’ve struck ! Thank God ! We’ve gone in first ! They’re taken by surprise ! Listen to the guns ! the guns ! the guns ! God be praised ! the guns ! ”

No one attended to him any more and now he heard and felt the dim shuddering thud, the unending muffled thunder that seemed to boom from the ground underfoot, that reverberated in the limbs rather than resounded on the ear-drum the thud and thunder and muffled din of the guns beyond the sands, under a hundred miles away

His men out there in the black night, sweating and steady under the flash and thunder of the pounding guns

And he dying in a gaming-house near Alexandria behind the lines,

Curtains of smoke, curtains of smoke below Ranthambor, curtains of smoke beshrouding the crowns of Ranthambor through the smoke a star shining very far, very far away indeed the face of Tara Devi



APPENDICES

ETHNOLOGICAL NOTE

IT is usual to speak of "aboriginals" and "Dravidians" in India, and even of Indians in general, as if they were a race on their own but in point of fact the entire population of India, with the exception of a dash of Negrito stock in the south, and an evident Mongolian strain in Bengal, Nepal, and again the south, is of European stock. The "aboriginals" are ethnologically about as aboriginal as the Basques and the "Dravidians" about as non-European as the Egyptian or Arab, both of whom are white men. The complexion of India is a variable tan two thousand years ago (as is on record) the immigrants into the Punjab were actually fair.

It may be said here that the men of this great North-Western race, when coming from the Hills, are of a ruddy complexion, and when clean-shaven look startlingly like the fair Caucasians, Macedonians, Englishmen and Scots. Jats and Rajputs together number 19 or 20 millions without certain cognate but low caste tribes and without the Pathan peoples.

This latter race is in point of fact the pure-bred Eastern branch of the race known to us as the Nordic (aliases, the Teutonic, Germanic, Scandinavian, Caucasian, Gaulish or Cymric race. Only a certain percentage of German nationals are of this race, the majority being of Slav race). The ethnological characteristics of this race are tall stature, dolichocephaly, leptorhiny, leptoprosopism, combined with fair types. A subsection of this race is normally brunet. Whereas the climate and latitude of Western Europe favours the retention of the fair colouring, the climate of the Indian plains favours the development of brunet colouring.

The tan of the Indian complexion varies in relation to three factors (a) length of time the stock has resided in India, (b) geographical seat, (c) degree of individual seclusion from the sun. Thus the secluded daughter of a Rajput or Mahratta chief will be paler than a kinsman of the fields. The family of a Bengal trader transferring to the Northwest Frontier grows appreciably paler. Indians are often fairer than Spaniards or Italians. Indian pigmentation is not deep-seated, as is the negro's which appears even in internal organs, such as the brain, etc.

No moral or intellectual superiority can be claimed in favour of black, yellow or white complexion, long or short skull, straight or slanting eyes, or any other physical feature. Affinity of character and opinion does however exist.

The colour-question in India is a myth and has largely been fabricated by the impact of the immigration of the latest whites who themselves are only prevented from the inevitable heritage of another two thousand years' sun by the steamer and the aeroplane.

India will be judged among the European peoples.

NOTE ON RELIGIONS AND CASTES OF INDIA

THE principal non-Hindu religions of India are Islam Jain Sikh Buddhist · Zoroastrian Christian With the exception of the animist practices of outcaste aboriginal tribes, all other forms of worship can probably be considered a form of the Hindu religion

Islam The form of monotheism taught by the prophet Mahomet It proselytises by persuasion or the sword It falls into two sects, Shiah and Sunni Its followers in India constitute between a quarter and a third of the whole population (about 94 millions) Indian Mahommedans fall into four classes

Sheikh (lord) Hindus who became Moslem

Sayad Descendants of Arab evangelists

Mogul Turkish, Tartar or Mongolian Moslems

Pathans Speakers of Pushtu frontiersmen

As all Mahommedans intermarry, differences of race tend to disappear Women are partly secluded and may go about veiled, attend services in the mosques, separated from the men and, properly speaking, are considered to have no souls

Prayer must be performed five times a day on a mat facing Mecca It is a man's duty to make the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime The Aga Khan is the head of one section of Moslems in India, the Sidi (Arabians), and subsists on the indulgence-moneys of the Faithful, being weighed in a scales against gold

Jainism A very old and powerful community, Hindus of a sort, worshippers of the Spirit, not polytheists but adopting the god Ganesha as their patron The clerics, and monasteries, are headed by pontiffs and are of men of immense ancient learning they have preserved great libraries of extreme antiquity The laity are engaged largely in banking and trading Jains take no life—a strict Jain will dust his seat before sitting on it—and are severe in principles They accept converts Their manners conform to the Hindu They may derive something from Buddhism They are in some respects the Quakers of India They number about one and a half millions

Sikhism A very simple monotheism, founded by the Guru Baba Nanak (A D 1469–1539) He left a book, the Granth Sahib, and was followed by a succession of Gurus of whom the tenth, Guru Govind, was the last He formed them into the Khalsa (Pure Society), gave all the Rajput cognomen of Singh (Lion), instituted a ceremony (the taking of the Pahul) and distinguished them by a dress consisting of *Kes*, the uncut hair rolled on the head *Kachh*, shorts *Kirpan*, the dagger of steel *Kara*, the iron bangle *Kangh*, the iron comb Converts are accepted but the Khalsa is predominantly of Jat race The brotherhood numbers about five and a half millions

Buddhism A religion of The Eightfold Way, founded by Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha, a prince of the tribe of Muni, born in the sixth century B C For about a thousand years Buddhism was the predominant faith of India, reaching its apogee under the Emperor Asoka (267 B C), by A D 500 the tide of Hinduism had flowed back over it and now it is to be found chiefly outside India (Assam, Burma, Ceylon, etc) It is based on the theory of successive reincarnations, the ultimate object.

achievable by following the Way, being reunion with the All-Spirit (Nirvana) The Way consists of contemplation, charity, activity Converts are accepted Buddhists number about 232,000

Zoroastrianism Worship of God or the Spirit under the form of the Sun and Fire, as directed by the pastoral Persian Sage Zoroaster This religion is practised by the Parsis, Persians who left Persia about the seventh century A D The dead are exposed in closed edifices for carrion-birds to demolish and there is belief in the continuation of life after death Women are not secluded The Parsis constitute a small community, do not accept strangers into the faith, are monogamists, and may exercise free choice in marriage They live chiefly in ports and cities to the westward, engage in commerce, and are wealthy Their dialect is Gujarati but they retain kindred feeling with modern Persians through the faith is no longer held in Iran They number about 115,000

Christianity There are some six and a half million Christians, some the descendants of mixed marriages, some converts Converts come largely from the lowest castes, to whom the teaching offers hope and self-respect Some forms of the religion are very old for example, a brotherhood of friar-faquirs claiming conversion by St Thomas, who have the Gospel of Matthew and the Sikh Canon, and South Indian Christians of the Syrian (St Thomas) Church

Hinduism or Brahmanism The Hindu religion is of extreme antiquity and variety To a large extent it has absorbed indigenous cults hence its extreme polytheism, though its earliest hymns reveal an already existing anthropomorphism In theory it is a comparatively pure and charitable religion but in practice it works out to gross idolatry, social cruelty, and often orgiastic forms of worship In any community the pure and gross forms will be found co-existent The basic conception of the religion is the worship of natural forces, especially creation and destruction The basic dogma is that of reincarnation in forms both animal and human Hence all life is sacred The two most sacred things in India are the Lingam and the Cow

This religion completely pervades the daily life of its followers It insists absolutely rigidly on personal, culinary and household cleanliness Marriage rules are exceedingly strict The dead are burned Converts are impossible since one must be born a Hindu On the other hand, it is alleged that alien classes can be incorporated if they petition the Brahmans, e g Europeans have been offered a caste status and Christian identification as an avatar of Krishna, the only condition being acceptance of Brahman spiritual sovereignty

Society is divided up on principles which are part racial, part religious and part occupational The reasons for these divisions are probably historical These divisions are called "castes" They have nothing to do with the Western idea of "class" A man or woman is born to a higher or lower caste according as he has earned by the virtue of his previous existence this doctrine is the doctrine of Karma The ultimate hope is to rejoin the Spirit (Nirvana), after which incarnation is not again suffered It may be noted that in the common doctrine a woman has no soul till she is consummated and consummation must occur before puberty Not all Hindus accept this and probably thus tenet, and the seclusion of women—the early high-caste Hindu woman was as free as the poorer Hindu women are to-day—arose from a desire

to ensure the women from Moslem invaders The following are the caste divisions of society —

BRAHMAN (*Twice-born*) The Levites of this religion.

Brahmans constitute the guardians of religion and learning. They are in general of most astute intelligence They command reverence as being semi-divine When not priests or pundits, they function as servants and farmers, being excellent in the former capacity as they cannot defile They are perfectly capable of arms when their aptitude for intrigue does not cripple them or the reverence due to them cripple discipline but as soldiers they campaign under the difficulty that they must starve rather than accept unclean food or water, or from unclean hands Most may not eat meat They number about fifteen millions The complexion generally is noticeably fair and the eyes may even be grey, where Brahmans are of the north-western race Brahmans may equally well be of Dravidian or other race, being then the descendants of the pre-Aryan priests or medicine-men

KSHATTRIYA (*Twice-born*) The rulers and warriors These often consider themselves the superiors of the Brahmans Probably what was originally required to figure in this caste was not royalty or birth but courage to defend the Brahmans and their religion The majority of them are styled Rajput (Sons of Princes) The Rajputs today occupy the social position of the old Kshatriyas, but it is doubtful if they are descendants of these, for the Rajputs present a racially homogeneous appearance (excepting certain houses of fabricated claims) Possibly the earliest arrived Rajputs married into old Kshatriya houses (See Ethnological Note) However that may be, Rajputs may eat meat on the field of battle or when hunting The complexion is noticeably fair, the eyes may be grey, and in the case of the neo-Rajputs, the features are noticeably Nordic

VAISYA (*Twice-born*) Traders There is an immense subdivision of castes in this category, chiefly on an occupational basis, all arranged by the priesthood from higher to lower, which does not prevent internal argument This category includes all "clean" trades, e.g. money-lending but not weaving or barbering They may eat no meat The physical type is darker than the above, revealing a mixed strain

SUDRA All castes from low to lowest, arranged by the priesthood, subject to much internal vanity They are "servers" This category contains all "unclean" occupations, e.g. body-washers, sweepers, etc This is the great army of those indigenous natives who desired place in the social fabric of the early white or dark-white invaders and were allotted the lowest The physical type is Dravidian, dark and generally slight. Many of these very humble castes are mistakenly called "outcaste"

"OUTCASTE" These are really not the unfortunates of the above category but those outside the Hindu cosmogony and therefore of no account whatever Moslems, Parsis, English, French, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, and certain indigenous tribes Gonds, Bhils, etc etc Some of these are "pariah" peoples they still use bows and arrows, are animists, will eat carrion, and are as shy as animals Some are allowed privileges in Rajput and other States as being "sons of the soil" and in touch with autochthonous divinities

No high-caste Hindu can accept food from the low or outcaste (with certain Rajput exceptions) and the shadow of the King of England

falling across a gardener's bundle of dinner, would "outcaste" the food and it would have to be thrown away. It is also possible by breaking caste rules to outcaste oneself.

It is generally supposed that the above framework of caste, with its very strict marriage and food rules, was to ensure that the invading races should not corrupt their stock with the "aboriginals," many races of whom, like the Bushmen of Australia, are of very poor physique and mental attainments and of very dark but rarely of black complexion. Most figuring in the first two castes are clearly of comparatively recent white origin. The Rajputs of Jat stock were apparently the last invaders accepted high into the Hindu framework and the later or lower comers remain outside as non-Rajput but Hindu (or Mohammedanised) Jats. Brahmanism suffered an eclipse by Buddhism of about a thousand years (500 B.C.—A.D. 500) and on its resurrection the caste-scheme appears to have been worked out with precision and the generality of India fettered into the system. While the Brahman and Kshatriya (Rajput) castes give evidence of comparatively recent white racial origin, the Vaisya castes rather show a mixture with longer-settled or Dravidian stocks (see Ethnological Note).

The epithet "Twice-born" is about equivalent to "baptized." The twice-born are wearers of the Sacred Triple Thread, the investiture of which, with the taking of the Staff and Bowl, is a boyhood initiation ceremony.

"Caste-marks" are properly sect-marks and not usually worn except by devotees of a given god. The ordinary red mark (or yellow or grey) is often put on by the wearer for reasons of vanity rather than religion.

HINDU CALENDAR (*Luni-solar*)

MONTHS are divided into the *Badī* (Dark or Waning) Half, and *Sudi* (Bright or Waxing) Half. The European equivalents are only approximate as the Lunar Year falls short of the solar by about eleven days. Cycles, eras, months and day-to-day are calculated by many differing systems. In Northern India the eras commonly used are *Saka* and *Vikram*. The month ends on the full moon. The New Year most commonly held now is *Chait Sudi 1st*.

New Year	Pus	end December
(Ancient)	Magha	January
	Phalgun	February–March
	Chait	March–April
	Baisakh	April–May
	Jeth	May–June (Hot Season)
	Asarh	June–July (Hot Season)
	Sawan	July–August (Rains due)
	Bhadon	August–September (Rains)
	Asoj	September–October (Rains over)
		(Intercalary Month if any)
	Kartika	October–November
	Margashir (Aghan)	November–December

GLOSSARY

Aheria	Spring Hunt astrologically appointed
Apsara	celestial nymph who carries off the soul of a warrior dying on the field of battle
an	oath
aryaputra	'son of the pure' A term of conjugal intimacy (antique)
-bai	lit woman Suffixed to proper names
bania	money-lender
bardai	bard or chronicler
basant	spring
bail	bullock
bhuti	water-carrier
Brahma	God the Creator 'The greatest of all divinities' Brah- mans claim to be sprung of his head
Brahman	see Note on Religions and Castes
Brahmo	a reforming Hindu sect
bund	dam
Chambal	tributary of the Ganges
channa	gram
charpoy	string bed
chiragh	a very small clay saucer to hold oil and a wick
chhota hazri	early breakfast
chokar	bran
crore	ten million, written 1,00,00,000 (100 lakhs)
cummerbund	a broad sash
cuscus	an aromatic grass, the roots woven into curtains for the hot weather and kept sluiced with water
dacouty	robbery with violence
Deccan	central-uplands of India
Diwan	Chief Minister
dhai	foster-mother, midwife, of barber-caste
dhoti	a loose white skirt cloth worn by men instead of trousers, somewhat resembling the classical Egyptian garment
darbar	court reception
Durga	goddess of death, of children, and of strongholds An aspect of Parvati, q v
faqir	ascetic
gadi	sacred seat of rule
Ganesha	elephant-headed divinity, patron of wisdom, gates, undertakings
Gauri	goddess of fruits of the earth (Ceres) An aspect of Parvati, q v
gharri	cart or carriage
ghat	step or platform
gola, -i	house bonds
guru	a religious teacher
Hanuman	monkey-headed divinity
Hara	see Siva
Hari	god of love an aspect of Krishna, q v (Eros) Occasion- ally also of Vishnu as a babe
Holi	Spring Carnival

Indra	god of the Firmament A major divinity
Jain	a non-Hindu community See Note on Religions and Castes Generally engaged in banking and legal professions Highly esteemed for learning, wisdom and formerly suspected of magic practices
Jat	various connotations Originally this was the national name of a people invading India B.C. 250-A.D. 250, of which the Rajputs were the fighting classes Some Rajputs preceded the bulk and some came later (the neo-Rajputs) This race was cognate with other invaders, with whom it forms the North-Western race of India, a branch of the Nordic Race (see Ethnological Note) In Pathan lands, <i>Jat</i> now denotes a camel-man In Hindustan, <i>Jat</i> generally denotes an agriculturist but retains an element of its national significance (See Rajput, <i>infra</i>)
-ji	suffix appended to names, etc., denoting respect or affection
jodhpur johar	trousers, rucked from knee to ankle, originating in Jodhpur rite of mass-immolation of wives and daughters while the husbands go out to die on the field of battle
Kali	goddess of death An aspect of Parvati, q.v.
Kamdeo, Kama deva	god of love (Cupid)
Karma	doctrine that men reincarnate according as they have earned in the previous life
kunkum	red paste of turmeric and lemon-juice
Krishna	deified hero of the Maha-bharata epic Reared by nymphs in Vraj on the river Jumna, worshipped widely as a Babe, also as the shepherd flautist playing to the nine nymphs of music He is an avatar (periodic incarnation) of Vishnu the Sun and Preserver His colour is blue As a historical personage previous to his apotheosis he appears to have been a prince living about 1200 B.C., ancestor of the Indu (Lunar) Rajputs (i.e. Bhatti and Jareja races of Jaisalmer and Cutch)
Kshattriya kungura	see Note on Religions and Castes semicircular crenellated battlements
Lakh	a hundred thousand, written 1,00,000 (100 lakhs = 1 crore)
Lakshmi	goddess of wealth and luck
Lingam	see Siva
lotah	vessel
lotus	large water-lily The blue lotus is sacred
machan	platform rigged up in a tree
Mhadco	see Siva
mahatma	a saint of a very high order, possibly an avatar (reincarnation) of the periodic great teacher
maha-rajah, -rani	(major) king, queen
Mahratta	a people inhabiting the Deccan, by calling pastoral They have been plunderers and are sturdy fighting men Chief principalities are Kolhapur, Gwalior and Indore
maidan	large open space
mangta	all who live by begging, including singers, certain priests, cripples, etc. etc. (Participle of verb "to want")

<i>mantra</i>	invocation or spell
<i>maund</i>	dry measure of weight, 80 lb
<i>megh</i>	cloud-gathering
<i>nautch</i>	entertainment of dance and song women entertaining thus, often prostitutes
<i>palki</i>	closed litter
<i>panchayat</i>	village council
Parvati	goddess, wife of Siva, a major divinity of many forms, being under various aspects the goddess of births, children, fruits and crops, strongholds, mountains, waters, death and souls
<i>pat-bardai</i>	chief bard
<i>patel</i>	village headman
Pathan	a people of the North-West frontier lands, bound with the Afghans in a loose league <i>Pakhtunwali</i> . Are Moslems and speak Pushto. The Afghans show a Semitic element. The Baluch are a cognate people but show a Persian (Tayik) element. Ethnologically, Pathans are members of the North-Western Race of India
<i>puggaree</i>	(<i>pagri</i>) turban
<i>puja</i>	act of worship
<i>pundit</i>	learned man (generally Brahman or Jain)
Punjab	a province of North-Western India, largely Moslem, dis- playing an ethnologically homogeneous population. Previous to becoming Moslem, the people were pre- dominantly of Jat and Rajput classes and may still preserve these distinctions. Owing to this racial homogeneity, caste is less rigorous here than further east
<i>purana</i>	old the Puranas, the old writings later than 500 A.D.
<i>purdah</i>	curtain
<i>purohit</i>	family priest
<i>rajah, rani</i>	king, queen
<i>rajkumar</i>	heir apparent
Rajput	Rajputs are of the Kshatriya caste (see Note on Religions and Castes) and were originally and in parts are still, the fighting classes of the Jat people. The early Rajput kingdoms extended from Kabul to Patna. The famous cities were Delhi, Mathura, Kanauj, Ayodhya (Oudh). The descendants of these early Rajputs are found in Kashmir, Nepal, etc. The present-day Rajputs (Wes- tern Rajputs) are found in homogeneous kingdoms bordering the Indian Desert, whither they withdrew rather than submit to the assaults of Islam (c. A.D. 1000), leaving behind them broken clans in Oudh (Eastern Rajputs). The neo-Rajputs appear to have been late immigrants adopted into the Kshatriya caste. Hence they intermarry with the old Rajput races but are of the same (Nordic) race which prevails all over North- Western India and which seems to have arrived mainly between 250 B.C. and A.D. 500, and to have flowed into and across Europe in the same period. See Ethno- logical Note.
Rama	deified hero of the Ramayana epic, ancestor of all Sur- yavansa (Solar) Rajputs (i.e. princes of Mewar, Jaipur, Marwar, Bikaner and their clans and offshoots). As a historical personage he seems to have been of a period

	slightly anterior to that of Krishna (c B C 1200), if the horoscope given in the epic is in fact true, the date of his birth was April 6, B C 961
<i>ramnu</i>	a game-preserve
<i>rao</i>	a baron
<i>raugla</i>	courts and apartments allotted to women
<i>resai</i>	wadded quilt
<i>rishi</i>	contemplative, a saint
<i>rupaka</i>	literary figure consisting of contrasted measures
<i>sais</i>	groom
<i>Saktidevi</i>	goddess of the female energy
<i>sati</i>	widow who burns alive on her husband's pyre
<i>serai</i>	hostelry
<i>shukar</i>	hunt
<i>shukari</i>	hunter, sportsman, servant who locates game
<i>shri</i>	blessed
<i>Sikh</i>	followers of a monotheistic religion founded by Baba Nanak (b 1469) (See Note on Religions and Caste) This religion will embrace any man or woman, but its followers are predominantly of Jat race in the Punjab area. Chief prince is Patila
<i>silah</i>	weapon
<i>Sitala</i>	goddess patroness of young children
<i>Siva</i>	god patron of war known also as The Destroyer, Skanda, Hara and Mahadeo (i.e. the Great God). Possessor of four arms and three eyes from the third of which will proceed the Fire of Judgment. Generally worshipped in the <i>Lingam</i> , the male emblem of reproduction. Is of a notoriously simple mind. One of the major divinities
<i>subahdar</i>	Indian officer
<i>Sudra</i>	see Note on Religions and Castes
<i>Swargi</i>	Heaven
<i>Swarij</i>	Home Rule
<i>tatty</i>	curtain
<i>thakur</i>	squire or small baron, <i>thegn</i>
<i>tika daur</i>	feast to celebrate accession
<i>Vaisya</i>	see Note on Religions and Castes
<i>vakil</i>	civil official, often a lawyer
<i>Varuna</i>	water-god
<i>Vishnu</i>	god known also as The Preserver (the Sun). One of the major divinities
<i>yogi</i>	contemplative ascetic, teacher

